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A small-town boy

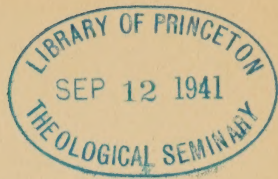
A SMALL-TOWN BOY



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TORONTO



A SMALL-TOWN BOY

by

RUFUS M. JONES

AUTHOR OF "FINDING THE TRAIL OF LIFE," ETC.

*"Those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet the master light of all our seeing."*

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1941

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FOREWORD

This Little Book is an attempt to interpret the life and education of a boy in a rural New England Town some three score or more years ago, and incidentally to interpret the Town, insofar as it was the boy's environment.

There is a story in the *Talmud* of a dream which came to Pharaoh one night. In this dream he saw two fingers come out of the dark, and between the fingers there appeared a rod of immense length. From the rod at each end there hung the two pans of a weighing scales. One pan, which was of gold and as large as a continent, was tilted down. The other pan, which was of plaited straw and which was as small as a bird's nest, was high up in the air. In the pan of gold, tilted down to the earth, were the wealth, the commerce, the warehouses, the warriors and chariots, the harvests and laborers of the land. Then Pharaoh saw a little child put in the pan of straw, which was high in the air. Suddenly the pan of gold, with its teeming load of material wealth, tilted up in the air, and the

straw pan came down; for the inestimable worth of the little child had outweighed it all.

We in America have not always caught this vision of human value, and we are inclined to assume that the rural communities are backward and do not count much, compared with the wealth and culture of the City. I am tilting the weighing pans the other way for a change, for I am convinced that life in my Town, with its hay and straw pan, had an incomparable value. It produced a type of education which seems to me now superior to what most city boys acquire. I am telling here of the multitudinous ways that nurture and formation came to a country youth. Very few persons realize how early the formation of life and character begins, or appreciate what a vast variety of influences shape the ideals and determine the line of march of the person's life. I have not given a complete account of the forces that "made" me, for that would have called for a large book, and I wanted to keep this one small, as I have done. The major shaping influences are told, but they are in most cases so subtle and implicit that they are often suggested rather than explicitly described.

I am sorry I did not have a chapter on the influences of Nature and one on Work, but

both these important factors of my life are in evidence in the Little Book. Sunsets and stars produced a spell on my young mind which has only increased with the years. The winter snow on the trees, the frost on the grass, the shooting blades of ice in the first stages of the freezing of the lake, always thrilled me. The smashing zigzag bolt of chain-lightning in our severe thunderstorms fascinated me, even when in the early years it frightened me. There was no sound that I loved more than the swish of my scythe in the grass, wet with morning dew. The next best sound was the stroke of my woodman's ax in the thick winter forest, as I cut at some monarch of the woods and made it fall exactly where I planned to lay it. This skill, this exercise, this joy, has golf considerably beaten.

What my reader will notice most will be my enthusiasm for this country life and nurture. It will become fairly evident that I was born and grew up in what I consider the best spot on the globe. I have seen a good amount of the earth's surface. I have visited goodly cities and beautiful regions on all continents, but I have not yet seen any part of the earth's crust where I should prefer to be born and to take my early intellectual and spiritual steps rather than in

the region where I began life. Thomas Hardy in the *Return of the Native* says, "More than ever he longed to be in some world where personal ambition was not the only form of progress." I was in that world once. A little Quaker boy was being teased by older boys for being a Quaker. He met his tormentors with these words, "I *is* a Quaker and I gories in it." I, too, glory in the fact that I "belonged" to a rural community which shaped my life, gave me my line of direction, formed my mind, built my character, created my ideals and made me the kind of person I am glad to be.

I have purposely woven in a good many stories, which are more or less native to the soil of that region. I do not claim that every one of the stories originated in this Town, or that they were all told precisely as I report them, but it is an "honest fact" that they represent very fairly and truly my community, and most of them were born on the spot. I have told some of them in my addresses before, but they all belong in this narrative of education. The reader must divest his mind of the usual estimate of the importance of wealth and of urban refinements for the formation of life. He must endeavor to see that there are genuine factors of life and culture in good inheritance, in

simple, honest community life, in humble but loving home atmosphere, in the pervasive power of real religion, in the play of country boys, and in the inner building work of the old red school-house. Anyway, these things did the business of life for one boy, whose testimony is given within. Emerson's Aunt Mary said of him that he was "born to be educated". It was equally true of me, but the real education began long before I reached college, as this little book will show.

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A SMALL-TOWN BOY

THE SMALL TOWN

In his famous Dartmouth College Case, Daniel Webster finished his plea with the words, "it is a small college, but there are those who love it". Those words may well be applied to my town, for there are "those who love it". It must be understood of course that in New England "town" means "township", and not city or village. The specific town under consideration here is named China. One can study the geography of the world from a list of the Maine towns. Albion bounds China on the north, Palermo on the east, and Windsor on the south; but the odd fact is that our China was not named for a country, but for an old and very doleful Hymn-tune, which the pioneer settlers loved to sing. I cannot believe that many souls were saved by that hymn.

The first settlement in what is now the township was made by Ephraim Clark and his wife Miriam with their children. They cleared a small field on the shore of the lake and built a log house in the summer of 1774. At the pres-

ent time I own that original field. The forest region had been surveyed and the farm lots marked out the previous year by a man named Jones, after whom the southern section was named Jonesville. Fortunately the name soon faded out, as Clarks and Chadwicks invaded the new settlement, while Benedict Arnold was making his tragic way up the Kennebec valley to Quebec. One citizen from this region joined the great expedition, showed true bravery, came out of the assault of Quebec holding his bowels in his hands, but, as one would expect, recovered, and returned to his home to die in peace and have a proper monument. The early settlements were made around the shores of a strikingly beautiful lake, which really consists of two lakes, joined at "the narrows", one seven miles long and the other nearly round, about three miles in diameter. There are five islands in the lake and a large number of points or peninsulas, which contribute very much to the beauty of the panorama. On the west shore of the lake there had been from time immemorial a camp of Abenaki Indians. Arrowheads and stone axes are still turned up by the plow, and a huge heart is cut on a granite boulder at the old camping place. It antedates the white settlement and must have been made by the Indians,

though its significance is and remains a mystery. These Indians quite naturally resented the invasion of their territory by the whites, but there were no scalping parties, and the Indians soon withdrew to settle in less disturbed areas of the forest. Nobody sympathized with their sorrows and their tragedy, and everybody said, or felt, "good riddance", when they gave up the unequal struggle and disappeared, and left us at a later time the beautiful camp site for our picnic place.

When that plowshare of the Almighty, the great glacier of the Ice Age, plowed out the lake, it piled up at the southern end a row of gravel-hills, which we called "the Presidential Range". There were beautiful slopes and curves to this range of hills, and beyond it used to lie a grove of beeches where we boys robbed the gray squirrels of some of their superfluous supply of beech-nuts. What a walk that was over "the Presidential Range"! In my boyhood days we had a pair of Bald Eagles that nested on the west shore of the lake. They were glorious birds with a wing-stretch of over seven feet. They were older than the Constitution of the United States and as completely dedicated to freedom. Even more important for me were the loons that inhabited the lake. They were "mys-

tic" birds, with two notes. In their high moments they uttered ecstatic notes which revealed their complete unity with the creation, and in their low estate their call sounded like a lost soul or a mystic in "the dark night of the soul".

About two and a half miles east of the south end of the lake is "Deer Hill". It is not very high, but it is so placed that from its top we can see both Mount Washington and Mount Katahdin. In between the two lordly mountains, one to the west and the other to the north, stretches the long range of mountains in western Maine, sometimes called "the Kennebago Mountains". Another Hill toward the northern end of the town, Palmetter Hill, presents an even more glorious view, on days of high visibility. Speaking of hills reminds me of an incident out of "the olden times". A man from another state was driving through Maine with an old-fashioned four-wheeled carriage and an equally old-fashioned horse. He stopped a farmer who was passing on the road, and asked: "How much longer is this hill? I've been driving up this hill for two hours; isn't there any end to it?" "Hill, stranger, there ain't no hill here. You've just lost off your hind wheels."

A little to the west of Palmetter Hill, in the region known as Dirigo, is a ridge with a tall

elm tree surmounting it which is visible from almost every point within a radius of six miles. Near the foot of it was the home of my beloved cousin, Charles Jacob, who through all the years of my youth was the other half of my life. The elm tree is a living monument and always revives the memory of him. He was a strange product to come from a farm in the edge of a forest. He had rare gifts of mind and heart, which suggested Parnassus rather than Dirigo. He was a child of Apollo, lispng in numbers from early childhood. He was shy, reserved, refined, gentle, but full of wit and humor, and one of the best companions a boy of a wholly different type ever had.

The town was named Harlem by the settlers who created it, but their children did not like that name, nobody tells us why, and in 1818, two years before Maine was carved off from Massachusetts and made a State, the town received the name of China—the only town in the United States to bear that name. And the short-lived bank which was established in our village was called “the Canton Bank”. At the turn of the century, about 1800, the Quaker Joneses and Jepsons and Dudleys began coming and soon the spiritual ascendancy was divided between the Baptists and the Quakers.

In 1774 a remarkable Quaker missionary from Long Island, by the name of David Sands, had built up a row of Quaker meetings through the region of the Kennebec Valley, and one of them was on the western shore of our lake at East Vassalborough. These Friends soon spilled over into the region on the opposite side of the lake, and a Quaker meeting began at what was called the "East Pond Side" as early as 1797, before the "invasion" of the Joneses from Durham and Brunswick. The leaven spread rapidly and went through the entire township. Before I came to birth three important Quaker Meetings had been established, one on the "East Pond Side", one on the West Shore, and a third one at "Dirigo", near the great elm tree, above mentioned. There were long stretches of road in these parts of the town where every house was a Quaker home. Nobody needed to lock his house at night, though it was well to fence in your garden, for Quaker cows were not taught to avoid the neighbor's cabbage patches, as we shall see.

At first there was a line, however imaginary, between the saints and the sinners in the town, and the dwellers on certain roads were not thought of, to say the least, as "the salt of the earth", but gradually more generous ideas pre-

vailed and the town became a unique cooperative community. If a neighbor, whether "saint" or "sinner", had an accident in haying-time, the neighbors turned out and put his hay in the barn. When trouble or disaster came upon any family, the whole community rose to meet it with sympathy and relief. If a barn went down in a hurricane, the neighborhood rallied together and replaced it, and the imaginary line between the sheep and the goats was gone. It was quite usual to "swap work" with a neighbor at any urgent season of the year, and these "swaps" were not made on theological lines—the "swearer" and the "prayer" worked side by side in amity. Of course the entire community assisted at "raisings" and "haulings", and obviously all the boys in the town were there. The population of the township in its palmy days ran from fifteen hundred to two thousand. There were, and still are, four small villages, each with a few hundred dwellers, while the rest of the population scattered along the roads that ramified the town. From the village at the South End of the lake no less than twenty-five of us have gone out to colleges and universities, and have become teachers, professors, and leaders of thought and action.

In 1830 a Library Association was formed in

the South End of the town and a significant Library was begun. That year three thousand dollars were spent in the town for liquor, it being assumed that nobody could work in the hay-field in summer, or break snow in winter, without it. At the centennial of the Library in 1930 it was reported that three thousand volumes had circulated that year and that not a single dollar had been spent in the town for liquor. It hadn't become a town of saints, but it had become a community of wise and sensible people who felt the importance of a clean, sane and cooperative life, and the Meeting House and the Church had done something to make it so.

Most of the citizens of the town have a quiet, salty humor, though they are usually quite unconscious of being humorous. They merely "talk right on" in a natural way, and the man who said, when he had a stroke, "they tell me I have lost my mind, but I don't miss it any", might have been found on almost any one of our farms. The native stock in a Maine town like ours have the natural wit of Elizabethan England, and one cannot hear better conversation at Harvard than I used to hear in our grocery store—not better but different!

Our marvellous lake is mainly fed by springs

which stem in the far-off hills. But I must make special mention of one of the few brooks that feed it. This brook which we called "Tannery Brook" was one of my major delights as a boy. I shall refer to it at greater length in a later chapter. It broadens out at its "mouth" into a respectable inlet where I learned to paddle and row, where we fished from the bridge, speared suckers in the spring, netted smelts, and swam on its tan and sandy bottom. But where did it come from? I knew it ran through our cow-pasture and was the home of a thousand "peepers", but its actual origin was a mystery, as origins usually are. It came out of a forest, that I knew. It drained a vast bog where cranberries and blueberries and running blackberries grew in abundance. What I did not suspect then, but know now, is that this bog has a thin, accumulated surface of sod and moss and bushes, covering a submerged lake forty feet deep, which, in ancient times, before the Indians came, poured itself into our lake through "my brook", and so on to the Kennebec and the Sea. I never realized as I roamed the bog for berries how my feet stood on a thin veneer of soil, above a lake as old as the glacier—perhaps a fit parable of some of the civilizations we know.

At the far western shore of the lake is another brook of larger dimensions—almost a river. It is the outlet stream, which flows into the Sebec River, just before its junction with the Kennebec, at the spot where the Block House of old Fort Halifax stands. This outlet stream runs various mills on its course to the River, and the mill dams hold the water of the lake at a high level during the early months of summer. On a memorable day my brother and I canoed the outlet stream through its devious wanderings through woods and pastures, around many “carries”, to its merger with the River, and we are apparently the only inhabitants of the Town that have ever gone to Fort Halifax by water.

One of the greatest events of the year in our lives as boys was the break up of the ice in the lake. In the depth of winter the ice was a good thirty inches thick and seemed to be made for all time. But about the time of the March Town Meeting, when the selectmen were chosen and the Fence Viewers appointed and Willis W. Washburn was elected permanent Town Clerk, the sun began to climb on its upward reach. That peculiar tilt of the axis of the earth, twenty-three degrees and thirty minutes to the plane of its orbit, worked a slow miracle, for

which we always watched. The ice began to honey-comb under the more perpendicular rays. Then the spring floods raised it and broke its hold on the shores. As the big cakes of ice separated from the solid mother-mass, they gave us dangerous rafts on which we ventured. Then all of a sudden came the great day. A powerful South wind would get behind the honey-combed ice, drive it crashing against the shores, break it into pieces, and then send it packing through the Narrows and into the Nowhere. In one day it was gone.

The farms began at the shore of the lake and ran about a mile and a quarter into the forest. The mowing fields came first, with their trim stone walls between the farms. The main crops were hay, potatoes, and oats, with usually a good apple orchard on a gentle slope. I am inclined to think that the best apples and the best potatoes ever raised since Eden, grew here. Stern, hard, rocky soil it was, but the skillful tilling hand of man did wonders with that stubborn soil. And if a pious minister said to a farmer, "Isn't it wonderful what you and God have done with this hard piece of ground?" the farmer with equal piety and reverence would say, "You ought to have seen it when God had it all to Himself." But the native wag was apt

to say: "Yes, I was out of sight o' land once. It was over in neighbor Johnson's back field. There were so many rocks I couldn't see land."

Then beyond the tilled fields came the pasture for the cattle. Here were hillocks which we called "Indian Graves", covered with checkerberries, clumps of alders, and, in between, lush grass which the cows knew how to find. Our first task in the Spring, when the frost "went out", was to repair the pasture fences—and find arbutus. Beyond the pasture-land stretched the mysterious "woods", which were divided mid-way by the bog. In these woods we got our supply of Winter's wood for fuel, which we cut in the Autumn and hauled out with oxen in the Winter. My father bought another wood-lot of twenty-five acres on the Augusta Road, where we often got our wood in case the bog did not freeze before the snow fell, and thus was unsafe for oxen. Father paid fifty dollars for this wood-lot. It contained a precious cedar swamp, the home of a million "lady-slippers" of rare types. It was an ancient bird-sanctuary. It had one pine-tree that scaled two thousand feet of lumber. We often got our Winter's wood there. We built a barn of the lumber it furnished. I inherited it and have built three cottages out of it and have sold eight hundred and fifty

dollars worth of lumber out of it—and it is still going strong! It is almost like the widow's cruse.

It is not a rich town, nor is it a poor one. The soil is good and when properly treated it rewards the laborer. A good skillful farmer in this town can make a good living, raise a family and have a bank account. A slipshod farmer will have a hard time, here as everywhere else. In my boyhood days there was very little actual money in sight. Business was in the main done by barter or by swap. If we were poor, we didn't know it, and that was better than being rich—and knowing it.

The following chapters will, I hope, fill in the concrete lines of the picture and enable the reader to see my beloved town, before it had telephones and automobiles and bath-tubs. It made its own shoes. It produced its own food. And its best crop was its men and women. Bernard Shaw has called the United States "a nation of villagers". Splendid! I like that! A great many of us originated in the country. I hope the habit will continue.

There is a Maine story of a youth who was "drawn" or "drafted" to train at the "muster". He was a shy and timid youth, and he told his mother as he went to the drill that he was sure

he wouldn't "darst to fire off his gun". He came home the first night and his mother asked him "how it went". "Pretty good", Eben said, "only I didn't darst to fire my gun." "Now tomorrow, Eben, you must stop this foolishness and obey the orders." "Well, I will try, Mother." The next day Eben shouldered arms and grounded arms and loaded arms as ordered, but each time the order came to "fire", Eben went through the motions without pulling the trigger. Then at the order each time he rammed another charge into the old musket. When he came home that night his mother said, "How did it go today, Eben?" "Oh, much better. I did everything I was ordered—except I didn't fire off my gun." "You poor, silly boy, give me your gun. I will show you how to fire it." Eben ran and hid behind the hen house. The mother fired the gun which "kicked" unmercifully, and as she was getting up from the somersault the gun gave her, Eben ran out of his hiding and said: "Don't touch the old gun, Mother, it has got nineteen more charges in it!" That is true also of my story of the small-town boy. There are at least nineteen more "charges" that might be fired.

There is another illustrative incident which must be related here. There was a blacksmith

in one of our Maine towns who was so extremely short of stature that he was very humble-minded. He became deeply in love with the tallest and fairest girl in the village, but he was too humble to propose to her, and carried his secret for years locked in his bosom. One day the girl came to the blacksmith shop to get something made. The blacksmith pounded it out for her on his anvil, and the girl was so appreciative of his skill that in a moment of heroic confidence he proposed to her, and she accepted him on the spot. He leaped on the anvil and kissed her. Then he asked her to take a walk with him, which she did. After a suitable time he asked if he might kiss her again. "Oh, no," she said, "not out here in public." "Well, then," he said, "if there isn't going to be any more kissing, I am not going to carry this anvil any farther."

I have carried my "anvil" as long as I am going to, and here I am unloading my burden for the "kind reader" to take it up.

A BOY IN HIS HOME

It was an accident, which I think God planned, that my prospective father and mother met one day in a home on the "Neck" between our two lakes, Mother from Albion about ten miles away, and Father from China, both towns in Maine. They were at once drawn together in spirit and quickly became in love with one another. Mother was eighteen, with hair a bit too bright red to be called "auburn", and Father was twenty-three. They were married in 1852 and came to live at once with my Grandfather and Grandmother, Abel and Susannah Jones, in the large two-story house which Grandfather had built in 1815. It was a long time after the marriage—eleven years—before my turn came to be born.

This Grandfather Abel, who built the house, was the son of Caleb, who was the son of Lemuel, who was the son of Thomas Jones of Hanover, Massachusetts, the original migrant from Wales, in 1690. Lemuel married Waite Estes

who was descended from four Rhode Island Governors, Nicholas and John Easton, and Caleb and John Carr; therefore, they too are my ancestors. Lemuel had twelve children, and they in turn averaged ten children apiece, so that he had one hundred and twenty grandchildren. There is a Maine story of a man who caught a moose and took him about to exhibit in a tent in country villages. He asked ten cents to see the moose, or twenty-five cents for a family. In one of the villages a family like this of Lemuel's came to see the moose. The old patriarch put down his quarter and was filing his family by when the owner of the moose called him back and said: "Here, take back your quarter. It means a good deal more for my moose to see your family than it does for your family to see my moose!"

Abel was born in Brunswick, Maine, and belonged to the near-by Durham Quaker Meeting. Like Abraham of old, he "went out", at the turn of the century, not quite knowing whither he went and pitched his tent on the east shore of China Lake, about two miles from the northern end of it, cleared a farm out of the primitive woods, built a log cabin, and had the extraordinary good fortune to marry Susannah Jepson, the daughter of Jedediah. He was of

Irish stock and so, in Abel and Susannah, the Welsh and the Irish, like righteousness and peace, "met together and kissed one another". Susannah's mother was Peace Robinson, and she was descended through Isaac Robinson of Plymouth from the great John Robinson, who sent out the Mayflower Pilgrims from Leyden, and consequently I am descended from the man who said God had more light to break forth out of His Word. Abel and Susannah gave birth to eleven children, Eli being the first, and Edwin, my Father, being the last, after an interval from Uncle Eli's birth of twenty-one years.

Edwin's wife, my Mother, was the daughter of Matthew and Salome (Goddard) Hoxie. The Hoxies were English, but no doubt with a French background, perhaps linked up to England through the Norman Conquest. I got my blue eyes and light hair, as well as my middle name, from this Hoxie grandfather. He was a highly skilled cabinet maker and he was known far and wide for his genial humor. He was a solid Quaker, with an interesting woof of fun strangely interwoven with his warp of spiritual seriousness. When a new doctor came to practice in the town, Grandfather Hoxie invited him to his shop and took him to his store-room and showed him the large stock of coffins which

he had made, saying, in his quiet humor, "I think perhaps there will be coffins enough for thy first year of practice".

Abel Jones was rugged, an active, driving man who did things, and he soon had his land feeding his growing family and somewhat of a surplus besides. In 1815 he decided to move southward and clear another farm, this time near the south end of the lake where he built my birthplace and created an excellent farm out of the wilderness. First and last this vigorous ancestor of mine cleared seven farms and made them blossom like the rose, one for each of his sons. This meant not merely the conquest of the forest in terms of trees and stumps, but it meant also the removal of the vast accumulation of rocks and boulders, which in great profusion the glacier of the Ice Age had deposited in this region. They formed the stone walls which divided farm from farm. One of my favorite stories tells of the farmer—it might have been Grandfather—who was building a stone wall four feet wide and three feet high. A neighbor, coming by, said: "What are you building such an odd-shaped wall as that for, wider than it is high?" The old farmer said: "So that, if it ever blows over, it will be higher than it was before!" That was Grandfather's idea of

a wall, and his walls "stayed put" until macadam roads came into fashion, when the stone walls were ground up to make roads.

I never saw Grandfather, but Grandmother lived fourteen years after I was born, and she is a memorable part of my childhood and youth. She was born before the Constitution of the United States was written. She was a little girl when George Washington began his creative task of building a nation. She was nineteen years old when in 1803 she married Abel and took her place beside him as a pioneer builder of farms. She was fertile in stories of pioneer life in the forest. I used to draw up a little stool and sit at her feet and say, "Now, Grandmother, tell me some stories of the olden times". There were stories of bears, and moose and deer, and "loup cervies". There were so many herring, in the spring run, that one could walk across the outlet stream of our lake on their backs! There were stories of Indians, stories of hunger in the winter, stories of perils by lake and land. A neighbor's precious cow was accidentally shot for a deer, and another neighbor had a hog who made marauding excursions into Grandfather's vegetable garden. One day in a moment of stern displeasure Grandfather said: "I wish that hog was dead!" That was sugges-

tion enough for the event that followed. Little Eli and his brother heard the remark and knew that their father always spoke the truth. The next time the hog appeared the two boys drove the beast into a corner and killed him with an ax, and ran in triumph to tell their father. But he, to their surprise, did not appreciate their bold deed! There was little he could say, for the boys reiterated: "Thee said, thee wished he was dead and now he *is* dead!"

There may have been many pioneer grandmothers like mine, but if so, it was a great epoch. She was a woman of remarkable qualities, with breadth of mind and depth of heart, and a culture whose source and origin nobody could explain. She was practical, of course. She had to be *that* to be the wife of this farm-maker. She more than held up her end of the tasks. All the clothes the family wore came from her spinning wheel and loom. All the butter and cheese the family ate came from her churn and cheese-press. All the soap they used came from her big iron kettle where she boiled it. She was an Elder in the Quaker Meeting, and yet she smoked her T. D. pipe three times a day, and in spite of the nicotine she lived to be ninety-three years. She bore eleven children and raised

and nurtured all but two of them. Her oldest son and her eldest daughter, Peace, were among the foremost Quakers in America in their day, and every one of her children had spiritual quality of a high order. She and her pioneer husband made farms, but also made high-powered lives as a by-product. She brought a mystical quality from her Celtic line, and though she never heard the word "mystic", she was a practical mystic and she passed on to her children and grandchildren her mystical strain.

For almost a year, when I was ill at the age of ten, I spent most of my days in Grandmother's room, talking with her, or reading to her, and she became an indispensable part of my life. At her suggestion I began to read the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation, much of it aloud to her. I got on well with the narrative books, but when I was in the middle of the Book of *Jeremiah* I came to a full stop, so that I missed the glory of the complete achievement, but Grandmother and I settled many knotty problems over which the higher critics are still wrangling!

I have said much in another place of that beautiful neuter flower, my Aunt Peace, but no account of my family could have true reality with this remarkable woman left out of it. The

greatest wonder was how she could have acquired her peculiar culture, her refinement and her grace of manner. She grew up in a pioneer clearing. She had almost no schooling. She never went away in her youth from her local habitat. But the fact was unmistakable that from somewhere she possessed a unique wisdom, a well trained and a well stored mind. She could always help me with my school work, but that was the least of her gifts. She saw through the complications of all my human problems of life. There was an uncanny infallibility in her insight. She always left me free to act, but when she finished diagnosing a moral situation there was only one right course open. I did not always take the path of wisdom, but I had sense enough to see that she was "on the side of the angels", even when I was kicking against the pricks. What I puzzle over even now is how she knew so much about a boy, and how with her heavenly wisdom she could be so practical about everyday matters.

I had no doubt then or ever about her intimate relations with God. She was one of those rare persons whom He whispered in the ear. She never told me how she came by this divine intimacy. She never used the word "mystic" and did not know that she was one, but here in

a back-woods community, with almost no books and no *guru* to guide her, there blossomed this rare flower of the mystical life, and she led me on by almost unconscious steps into this way of life, where she was at home and “far ben”, as the Scotch say.

But there was a mother-quality about Mother which even Aunt Peace did not have and could not have. The act of giving birth to a child and the relationship which attaches to the event of birth have no parallel. Mother talked less with me about the issues of life than Aunt Peace did, but there was a tenderness and a sacrificial love in her dealings with me which could come only from a mother. In the supreme crises in this boy's life she was *there* and her magic touch opened the right gate. She had to fit into and to manage a home in which lived these two strong dominant women, Grandmother and Aunt Peace, who had long preceded her in the family and were powerfully entrenched, but Mother was plainly enough the head of the family, and there was never a sign of contention to mar the ordering of love. It was a home that “nurtured” in the things that matter most for the shaping of life. We possessed little of this world's goods, though we were hardly conscious of the narrow limits, but we were very rich in those things

which count as the foundations of life and character. My Father had the misfortune to be the victim in his childhood and youth of mysterious attacks of illness which were called "fits". They were apparently not epileptic in character, and they gradually ceased to occur, but they profoundly affected his life. I never saw him have one of these attacks, but they occasionally occurred after I was born, and I remember a few times there were days when he stayed in bed. In spite of this, Father had a powerful body. He was physically the strongest man in our community. He was skilled in the technique of all types of labor on the farm, an expert with any tool which a farmer used, and especially with an ax in the woods, and from him I learned the woodman's art. He was slow to begin a piece of work which had to be done, but when once he had launched upon it he outdistanced his neighbors and finished his planting or haying or harvesting before anybody else in the region.

He lacked the intellectual quality of his older brothers and sisters. He was not a thinker. He had no range of scholarship. He was quiet, meditative, with no gifts of easy conversation and unable to express himself easily in public speech. He often spoke in Quaker Meeting, but

he had a repetitive message, with few fresh ideas. He insisted on a religion for *this life here and now* and on making "a little heaven on the way to Heaven". I always knew in advance that he would say those two things, but I also knew that they were worth saying. He was a straight, honest, faithful, rugged man who in his small round did his plain duty day by day, and somehow managed to support our large family with his hands. He did not discipline me—that task fell to Mother. He seldom corrected me, but I instinctively knew that there were certain things which his son could not do. He would look at me in a peculiar way which meant more than a "thrashing". Once when I was working with him he thought I was hurt, and he asked if the tool I was using had hurt me. "Yes", I said, "it hurt—like the devil". Father stopped, put down his ax, turned full face to me, with an extraordinary look, and said slowly: "Thee is never to use that expression again in thy whole life". Well, I never have said it since, and I could not say it, or anything worse than that, without seeing in memory Father's face looking at me reproachfully.

There is a well-known story, perhaps apochryphal, that Queen Victoria once heard one of her grandsons use a bad word. She called him

to her and said: "If you will promise never to use that word again I will give you a shilling", and the trade was "implemented". A few days later the same boy came running to the Queen and said: "Oh, Grandmother, I have got a word now that's worth a guinea!" My Father's method anticipated and forestalled the more high-priced word. We children always prized an incident which showed Father's casual way of taking things, and at the same time the real focus of his estimate of life. Our cows had got out of the pasture and had done some damage to a neighbor's garden. It ought not to have happened, and it called both for apology and for reparation. The neighbor in a rage came to Father and made a very hot denunciation of the bovine invasion. Father listened quietly to the fervid speech and then said: "I don't see how anybody with an immortal soul in him can make such a fuss over a few cabbages!" I hope the cabbages got paid for, but of that fact there is no memory extant.

One of the things Father loved best, after due care for his immortal soul, was to own and to drive a fast horse. We had a remarkable colt with a Morgan pedigree. She fell into the barn cellar in early youth and dislocated a hip, which defaced her beauty, but strangely enough did

not materially lower her speed, and Father could get an extraordinary pace out of "Fannie" on the road. We owned a share in the near-by Fairground, where the annual cattle-show and horse-trotting occurred. There was no event of the year quite like the day when Father took me as a boy to "the Fair", which far surpassed in glory the later "World's Fairs". On the way to the Fairground, Father drove "Fannie" by every wagon we overtook. We drove through the gate without having to pay admission, which was glory enough, and Father always took "Fannie" a turn round the trotting park where the jockies were testing out their horses for the coming race. It was hard to tell whether Father was thinking of his immortal soul or of Fannie's marvellous speed! There is no question what the boy was thinking about!

One of the strangest things about our home was the fact that for me as a boy both our cellar and our attic were "inhabited" by invisible beings of a seriously dangerous order. Nobody ever suggested it to me; it was my own imaginative creation, and I never discussed it with anybody, young or old. The whole idea would have been instantly exploded, if I had proposed it to the family. But it was none the less *real* in that it existed only inside of my head. In the cellar

“the beings”, whom to myself I called “Bougars”, were lined up at the foot of the stairs, while in the attic they were marshalled at the top of the stairs. You were “safe” if you kept the proper distance, and you were “safe” if you went into “the dangerous area” with a lighted candle or a lamp. But anything might happen if you invaded “the inhabited area” without a light, which I was sure not to do.

I was not ordinarily a timid boy. I went into the barn late at night and I went all alone into the woods, and there were very few things I was afraid of in the world of my childhood and youth. But this idea of invisible beings lasted on throughout my youth and was, I am convinced, a feature of my Celtic inheritance. It may be one reason why I became so fascinated with George Macdonald’s stories, in most of which there were “beings” like those at the foot of our cellar stairs.

I had two brothers and one sister. The oldest brother, Walter, was ten years older than I was, and he moved in a different orbit. He went away from home for his career in life when I was a little boy. I remember watching him drive away, making the first break in our family; I went up to my room alone and sat down feeling as though my diaphragm had fallen out and

there was no support for my lungs and heart. They seemed to be hanging loose inside of me. It was an indescribable feeling which I still remember. There were no tears, there was no sound, only the bottom had dropped out, and I discovered by the way my body acted how much I loved my brother. Alice was four years older, and Herbert four years younger than I was. Alice soon became a kind of second mother to me and at the same time a happy playmate. We invented games to play, and until I broke away and formed my indispensable group of boys she and I were always together. Herbert was a perfect dear then and always, but too little for most of the things that occupied me.

This country home with these humble inmates would seem to offer no scope for epic adventures. There were no windy plains of Troy. There were no caves of Polyphemus, no islands of the sirens, no oxen of the sun. But life was nevertheless one continual epic. I lived and moved in the Epics of the Old Testament. Every move in David's life was familiar to me. Every time I read the story of Joseph making himself known to his brothers, my eyes clouded up and my breast heaved with emotion. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not barbarous names, but true heroes living on a real stage

and doing what I felt sure I would have done. I had no doubts over Daniel's lions, and I waited eagerly every time I heard the story read for Daniel's answer to old Nebuchadnezzar in the morning. Esther and Uncle Mordecai were a part of my life, as real as our nextdoor neighbors. Joshua and Caleb always meant more to me than Moses did. They saw the giants in the land, the tall Anakim, they saw the city walls as high as the sky, they knew how difficult it would be to "take" the land that was promised, but they came back with the report: *We can do it*, and they faced the ten spies who had a "grasshopper complex" with the high quality of faith and expectation. In fact I lived all the time in a world of moral heroes, whose Epic deeds were more a part of me than movie actors or baseball heroes ever could be to a modern boy. A New Hampshire farmer read *Hamlet* for the first time. He said he didn't think much of *Hamlet*; it seemed to him like "a bundle of old quotations". The Bible was something like that to me. When anybody quoted it I knew where the passage came from.

I wonder what life would have been like to me if I had not had this epic setting for my stage. There was dull country life all about, no doubt, and very dull work and chores to do,

but I was never very far from an epic stage on which a moral hero was performing his act. Not only was my life part of an epic drama; it was a profoundly sacramental affair. We had no sacraments of the explicit type. I never saw as a boy anyone baptized. I never saw anyone partake of Communion. They were foreign to our family religion and were not ever discussed. We did not even celebrate Easter, or know the date of it. A high churchman observing us might easily have thought we were heathen. But our home was in a very real sense a center of the sacramental life. We began each day with a meal which ended in a deep communion of spirit with Spirit. We all knew what the real presence meant. We went to work, or we went to school, out of a living, throbbing hush of silence in which something more than form or formal prayer had taken place. Here it was that I learned the nearness and the reality of God as spiritual operating presence, and got free from the thought of God as a Sky-God.

But there was something more to our family religion than this morning devotion together. The life in our home was saturated with the reality and the practice of love. We spoke to each other as though love were ruling and guiding us. I cannot remember that Mother ever

shouted or scolded. She was often grieved, I know. Her face had a look of sadness, but she was tender in her sadness, and she conquered my stubborn nature and my thoughtlessness which was worse, not by scolding words, and not by whipping me, but by looking at me in *her way*. I could stand anything but *that*. She told me once that the only time her father punished her was to give her one stroke with his silk handkerchief which was punishment enough. It was all a part of the sacramental way—a spiritual reality—breaking through a physical medium. It was an old-fashioned home where *nurture* went on all the time. It was a life-building center. It was here that my anchors were forged. I had every kind of temptation, except bank-robbery. I was a member of a band of village boys—more or less the leader of the band, as we shall see—and we could think of an amazing list of things which to say the least were not saintly. I was very often on a thin knife-edge, with either side in delicate balance. But that home nurture, that culture of the spirit in the family-center, was always the determining factor. At least three times in my early period I was given what in the game of cricket is called a “life”. In cricket when the batter knocks a “fly”, which ought to be caught and put the

batter "out," but is "muffed" and not caught—then the said batter has a "life"; he is not "out" and has a new chance to go on making runs. Three times before I was twelve I looked death straight in the face, escaped it by the narrowest margin, as one dodges an opponent in football, and each time I got a "life"—a chance to go on "making runs". It was in one of these "life"-event occasions that I first "discovered" Mother and knew what her love meant. It was a little later, when the danger I faced was a moral one rather than a physically fatal one, that I discovered the depth of that love, and saw that it was the grace of God revealed in what a mother did to make her boy find himself. Ever since I have borne within me the sacred memory of that sacramental love.

I GO TO MEETING

A Quaker Meeting of the type which prevailed when I was a boy was a unique congregation, which would certainly have perplexed a visitor from the planet Mars, if he had happened to parachute down and had landed in time for Meeting. Charles Lamb has described in a memorable Essay the essential aspects of a Quaker Meeting as he knew it in London, but our Meeting was composed entirely of farmers and their families, and it had, as it was bound to have, a rural aspect which would have been unfamiliar to the famous essayist.

The plain looking meeting-house with unpainted seats and undecorated walls stood on a slightly hill from which we could see the Kennebago Mountains of Western Maine, eighty miles away. It formed the center of a small community of houses and farms, surrounded by a fringe of ancient forests in which, at least to my imagination, roamed deer and moose and bears,

and where "loup cervies" and catamounts and plain wildcats were waiting to pounce upon anyone who ventured into its depths. We lived three miles away from the Meeting and could reach it only by a drive in wagon or sleigh through the "dangerous" woods. Thither on Thursdays and Sundays we always went. In the winter there was a huge hot soapstone under the buffalo robe, and I used to slip down and sit on it or near it as we creaked through the snow. There were many other boys in the group, as the neighbors from near and far gathered to fill the meeting-house, which in my youth seemed to be of vast dimensions. There was no bell, no organ, no choir, no pulpit, no order of service, no ritual. There was always silence and then more silence. It was strange that these hard-working toilers kept awake through these long hushes, but they did keep awake, for it was "unbecoming behavior" to nod or to doze. For them this "silence of all flesh" was a sacrament of awe and wonder. They were in faith and practice meeting with God, and the occasion called for all their powers of mind and spirit. It might be supposed that a little boy, keyed to action and charged with animal spirits, on a hard bench, with feet unsupported, would have hated this

silence and would have longed for a chance to hit the boy in the next seat over the head. But that was not the case. Sooner or later the boy would get hit no doubt when the proper time came for it. But the silence came over us as a kind of spell. It had a life of its own. There was something "numinous" about it, which means, in simpler non-Latin words, a sense of divine presence, which even a boy could feel. It was almost never explained to us. There was very little said about it. No theories were expounded. No arguments were promulgated. We "found" ourselves in the midst of a unique laboratory experiment which *worked*. A boy responds to reality the moment he feels it, almost quicker than an adult does. He has not yet travelled so far inland from "the immortal sea that brought him hither", and he hasn't yet been "debauched" by commonplace words and phrases and the dull mechanics of life. Anyway that experiment with silence in the far-off period of my youth, sitting in the hush with the moveless group, concentrated on the expectation of divine presence, did something to me and for me which has remained an unlost possession.

A little country boy near my home was gazing out of the window with his eye fixed on the

sky, and his mother asked him what he was looking at. He said with simple confidence: "I was thinking how I could go up there where God is. There are a number of questions I want to ask Him and some things I want to talk over with Him!" I was as artless and naive as that, only I had got over the sky-idea very early in life and thought of God as a Presence in the midst with whom I could commune without any ladder. He came to our meeting with us, and we did not need to go somewhere else to find Him. I cannot remember when I first discovered that there was a meeting place within, where Spirit met with spirit and where the Above and the below belonged together. I knew it certainly as early as I knew that the water in our lake was buoyant and held up the young swimmer instead of drowning him. The two things came together. I learned to swim and to enjoy silent worship at about the same time. Almost always the silence was broken in the early part of the meeting by a vocal prayer.

"Haply some one felt
On his moved lips the seal of silence melt",

as Whittier has expressed it. The prayer always came out of the silence and was more or less the expression of the group-feeling. The prayer

was tremulous with emotion and it voiced for the waiting group the yearning for fellowship and communion. We all stood with bowed heads as the spontaneous prayer was being poured out. I was glad to get my little feet on the floor for a few minutes change of position, though I felt even then, and more emphatically later, that the act of rising and sitting down again disturbed the attitude of hush and reverence. But as soon as we were seated again the silence took on a new depth of penetration. The whole burden of worship was thrown upon each individual soul. One could be vacant and unconcerned with empty mind, *or* one could mount up as with wings of eagles into the heavenlies and find the Fatherland to which he belonged. Whatever was done in this period of silence had to be done by the person himself. It was once more like swimming. Nobody could do it for you. You either did your swimming or your worshipping *yourself*, or it wasn't done. There were no substitutes to perform for you in either of these activities. But silence never filled the whole duration of the meeting. In front of us and facing the main body of the congregation there were two raised seats on which sat two rows of gifted weighty Friends, who were more likely to be "moved"

to bring a message to the meeting than were the rank and file who filled the rest of the meeting-house, though no one ever knew in advance where the "inspiration" would break out. At the head of the upper row of women Friends sat a woman of unusual grace and dignity. She wore a bonnet of the usual Quaker type; underneath it a white muslin cap, and over her shoulders a neatly folded silk scarf or shawl. One could see that she was becoming tremulous, and I knew in advance that she was being inwardly "moved" to rise with a message. The first visible sign was the untying of her silk bonnet strings, then the graceful removal of the bonnet, which she passed to her nearest companion on the upper seat. Then she arose to her full height, and we felt at once the stateliness of her form and the queenliness of her presence. She had been to Africa in a sailing vessel as a missionary to Liberia. She had carried her message of love and healing to Ireland, Great Britain, Norway, Germany, France, Syria and Palestine. She had visited almost all the Quaker meetings on the American Continent. Here she was in her home meeting, probably the most widely known Quaker woman minister, rising to speak to these assembled farmer folk. Her voice was soft like the wind in pine

trees, but with a musical cadence and a carrying power which reached every listener. There was a slight change of position on the part of the hearers, and all eyes turned to the woman who had arisen. She began almost in a whisper, but we all heard every word of her Scripture text: "He brought me to His banqueting house and the banner over me was love." The amazing, seeking, pursuing love of God was always her theme. She was profoundly evangelical and preached to win souls from sin to a consciousness of salvation. The reality of heaven as the home of the redeemed was as sure and as vivid as was Mount Blue, which we could see from the Meeting-House hill. With a mounting voice—still as clear as a bell—she described the glories of the heavenly city. She had in her home a case containing specimens of the twelve stones in the foundations of the celestial habitation, and one could *see* the eternal home of the soul as she rapturously portrayed it. Then she swept our hearts with the lines which she loved to quote:

"Oh, well it is forever,
Oh, well for evermore,
My nest's hung in no forest
Of all this death-doomed shore".

As she sat down and put on her bonnet and tied its strings, a deep hush spread over us and the canopy of love became a real covering.

Nobody felt like breaking that silence until it had done its perfect work on our minds. It was pretty sure to be broken finally by a man near the top of the upper row on the men's side of the house. He was the husband of the woman who had spoken. He was as gifted and as widely travelled as was his wife. He was richly endowed with practical wisdom and clear common sense. He understood human nature, and he knew with remarkable insight what would reach and interest a boy. His voice had a nasal quality which amounted almost to impediment, but after the first few sentences that was forgotten, for we were caught and carried along with a distinct fascination and a narrative style of address. Bible heroes lived again as we listened. Incidents of travel, pictures of the Holy Land, illustrated his message. First and last and all the time it was about life here and now. How to live a good life, how to be a true citizen, how to meet the trials and temptations which beset us all, and how to come through valiantly and triumphantly. "Fight the good fight, lay hold on the life which is life indeed", rang out at the end like a trumpet call. Young as I was, I knew

that that was the gospel for me. Every time that this man spoke he built something into the fiber of my life. I wanted to be ready for the heaven I had heard about, but I didn't want "to be an angel just then and with the angels stand". I wanted to be a good boy and be a man like that stirring speaker and *do things*.

One reason why I loved to go to meeting through the woods was that another little boy was sure to be there, whom I loved and admired. He was a cousin of mine, of my own age. We always tried to get a few minutes together, and when occasionally we stayed for dinner he and I played together and planned our lives. The fellowship of youth and the pull and attraction of such early affinities are an essential part of the religious service. My cousin was gentler and more refined than I was. He had a touch of culture which I lacked, and I had some traits which he lacked, and we early discovered that we needed each other. It became an extraordinary attraction and a permanent affection which grew into the deepest kind of love that can exist between two boys. In later life we went away to school together, and then to college as room-mates and as fellow-travellers together in Europe. And this depth of life which bound two boys together was one unexpected

result of going to meeting. There was, too, a girl there of my age who drew glances from me and who was very much worth seeing. That, again, is a feature of a meeting assembly which counts for something, and may almost be good enough to be an end in itself!

But we did not always have the two wonderful ministers on the top seat. They had many calls which took them far and wide and left us sometimes with an awkward squad of exhorters. One "saint", however, was usually present with a brief message. She, too, had travelled widely among the Quaker groups in America. She had unique "openings" and "leadings". She was very sensitive to her inner Guide. She was greatly beloved, and what she said came with the weight of a rich and blameless life. Her voice lacked the music and cadence of the far-journeyed prophetess, but her message carried us along with real power, which even a boy felt. He usually sat by her on the ride home, and he was apt to tell her that what she said had spoken to his condition, for he loved her greatly. But, alas, not all who spoke were of this high quality. They could not be expected to be. The cream never goes all the way down to the bottom of the pan! Every country neighborhood has its "seconds", and it is for-

fortunate if it does not have a few queer specimens. We had our share of the "seconds" and the "queers". A Quaker Meeting of the free type is a pure democracy, and no talent, however small, is wrapped in a napkin and hidden away. Many of the one-talent exhorters, or peradventure quarter talent speakers, were "repetitive", and we all knew in advance what they would say and how long it would take them to say it. The volume of voice rose in the reverse of the significance of what they communicated, and their gestures were frantic in the same proportion. "The question isn't", a certain earnest speaker would say, "whether or no or not we darsent, no, not by no means". I have no idea what it was that we didn't dare, but the speaker left no doubt of our lily weakness in daring. Another of our urgent speakers called for spade work: "We must know of a digging deep. Yes, deep, down to that foundation which is beyond the reach of human scrutiny. Yes, scrutiny. And we must know of a riding through the gates. Yes, gates"! It never got me anywhere. It slipped off and left me unenlightened. "The trouble with this meeting", a critical-minded Friend who wore a white beaver hat would say, "is that we have no Caleb and Joshua to bring back the grapes of Eschol, and so the women

have taken to wearing bunches of them on their hats—yes hats”! With the text in Deuteronomy, “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked”, he would dwell upon the worldliness of these degenerate days and the decline of God’s true people. “Only a small remnant of the faithful remains. The rest have gone back to the flesh-pots of Egypt and even to the leeks and onions thereof.” And a woman speaker would tell us what would “make a dying bed as soft as ‘downing’ pillows are”.

Two fair sisters who were members of the meeting came under the spell of “the bloomer cult” of that period. They came to meeting wearing bloomer trousers. It created a great sensation as they walked up the aisle with as great determination as though they were storming the Bastille. They did not “testify” or give us propaganda about their “cult”, but, like the man in the Bible who “talked with his feet”, they preached with their legs, which at that period were modestly called “lower limbs”. They made no converts, but for many years they were silent witnesses to the coming freedom of a new day.

But the story does not end there. We used to have an amazing list of itinerant visitors coming from all parts of the Quaker world. This

custom of intervisitation was one of the most unique features of our religious fellowship. Those who came were for the most part the "pillar Friends" of the regions from which they came, and they brought to our remote village the ideas, the ideals and the spiritual leaven of the most favored sections of world-wide Quakerism. Instead of leveling down to a commonplace status of a single inbred community, we leveled up to the height of the best there was in our far-flung Society. It was an instance of cross fertilization through a waft of spiritual pollen from many fields of culture. The first visitor that I remember vividly was Stanley Pumphrey of England. I can still *see* him standing in our Minister's gallery, clothed in a pepper-gray suit of foreign cut, pouring forth with odd accent and peculiar phrase his thrilling message, which caught and arrested and fascinated the small boy who had ridden through the woods to hear him. Next came William Wetherald of Canada. He had been a professor at Haverford College. He was a scholar and spoke like one. He had been through a series of shifts and changes of religious experiences and had at last *found himself* on a high tableland of life, and I dimly knew that I was listening to an expert. But our "Jeshurun man" dis-

agreed with him and challenged him on the spot and plunged into a vigorous debate. It went too deep for me to follow the lines of it, but I was all for the visitor and against "Jeshurun", who, by the way, on his way home from Meeting one day was thrown from his wagon head on against a tree, but his high-crowned beaver hat broke the fall and saved his life.

Then came Rufus King of North Carolina, who, during the battle of Gettysburg where he fought on the Southern side, was convinced that war was wrong. He made his way to Philadelphia after the battle, became a Friend and travelled far and wide as a minister, and came to us with his droll and humorous way of speaking, but at the same time with a note of high reality, and his words stayed in the mind long after he was gone south with the wild geese. With him came Dr. James E. Rhoads, later President of Bryn Mawr College. He was one of the most dignified men I ever saw, with unforgettable grace of manner. There was an unusual power to his speech and a tenderness in his approach. He put his hand on my head and "prophesied" about me. It made a great impression on my family who thus got some assurance at that time in my boyish career, and it

probably had an effect upon me, at least I never forgot it. I cannot catalogue the long line of visitors who came in slow succession, but I must mention John Y. Hoover of Iowa, the uncle of Herbert Hoover. He was tall and gaunt, with an Abraham Lincoln type of build. He was a revivalist preacher, and one of the first to bring us word of the fresh "going in the top of the mulberry trees". Caroline Talbot of Ohio was another extraordinary character. Her peculiar strain was that of prophecy. She could see and reveal "states", and she would suddenly tell what was going on in your mind. I hardly dared to think while she was speaking for fear that she would fish out all my thoughts and my secret feelings.

Once each month in the middle of the week we had "monthly meeting" for business affairs. There came first a meeting for worship of the usual type, only larger than common. At the end of it, a dignified man who seemed to me unbelievably old and venerable, six feet and two inches tall, with long white hair to his shoulders, would rise and straighten up and say with slow modulation: "If Friends' minds are easy, I apprehend that this would be a suitable time to close this meeting and proceed to the business". As soon as he had finished and was sit-

ting down, a strange creaking was heard above, and "shutters" started moving down, as though an archangel from above was performing the miracle, and in a few minutes the room was divided into two. The men filed into one and the women into the other. A little table with a hinge on the rail of the facing seat was lifted up and fastened, and the two clerks sat behind it and guided the "business". It consisted largely of a searching inquiry into the state and condition, the moral and spiritual progress or decline, of the membership. Sometimes a new member was added; sometimes a member who had lapsed in faithfulness was subtracted. Sometimes two members wished to join in marriage, and their "clearness from other engagements" had to be investigated. Sometimes a Friend in the ministry asked for a liberation to go out to visit other regions in the love of the gospel, and the meeting would "loose him and let him go" with a blessing on his labors. It was hardly thrilling business for a boy, but there was always something that got through and reached the quick. It was worth a lot to be saturated with this dew of Hermon, and to catch with the family the smell of the lily. I shared in something which I knew meant everything to the group to which I belonged. Then there was

my beloved cousin waiting until we could get together at the close, and then a family dinner in some near-by Quaker home, a community meal which had all the fusing power of a sacrament. It no doubt all sounds dull and commonplace to those who are accustomed to high life with its spice and seasoning, but this old-fashioned way to Zion had its quiet thrills and made us feel like colts in the stall. The beautiful country Shulammite girl in the *Song of Songs*, who was loved by Solomon and taken to his place of splendor, soon grew disillusioned with love in a palace and longed for the old apple tree in her country home and "the comfort of apples". I have seen the world with its follies, and I am glad to get back in memory to the good old simplicities and realities of life.

Not far away from where we lived there were two brothers Jeremiah and Joseph, who were rather lively youths, but in a revival they were converted and got religion. One day Jeremiah was leading the service in an old church building which had pew-doors which swung open into the central aisle. The meeting had begun, and Jeremiah was reading the Scripture lesson when Joseph and a friend of his, named Elisha, came in late and walked up the aisle. It happened that Joseph was extremely splay-footed,

that is, he "toed out" to a remarkable degree, and as he came up the aisle, first one foot slammed a door to on the right, and then another on the left, so that his advance toward the front made considerable disturbance. Jeremiah stopped his reading and said, "'Lish, take Joe out and back him in"!

Well, I enjoy in retrospect being "backed in" to the realities of this old-time simple religion of my people and my youth. But I do not want to end this account with a frivolous note. I want rather to finish in reverence and profound appreciation as the reality deserves. Here in this plain house, with its hard wooden seats and its rustic worshippers, I found my way into the heart of religion and often felt its supreme realities. However far I might travel in later years with greater light I should never leave behind as outworn and untrue the lessons that were learned there. In another similar Meeting an ancient Friend with white hair and beard rose and said solemnly, "Be still and know that I am God". A little boy somewhat awestricken leaned over and whispered to his father: "Is he really". It would never have occurred to me that a man, however old and venerable, could be God. The idea of spiritual presence and enveloping divine life was so thoroughly settled.

THE NURTURING INFLUENCE OF THE OLD-TIME GROCERY STORE

Yes, the old order changes and good customs as well as bad ones pass away. It is odd how completely the world alters in a single life time and that, too, even in very conservative areas, as the rural "deestRICTS" always are. Among the changes which sweep away the old village landmarks none is more obvious to the old "native" returning to the haunts of his youth than the disappearance of the grocery store as the center of village culture.

The store is still there of course, doing business at the old stand and it is greatly improved as a mart of trade. It keeps a stock of supplies never heard of in the old days. But alas! it is only a store for trading purposes now and no longer a rendezvous for the neighborhood, and *miserabile dictu* it no longer purveys the unique culture which only an old-time grocery store could supply.

The building still stands at the cross-roads

“corner”. The front platform is still there with the cracks in the floor through which our pennies disappeared when to our sorrow we accidentally dropped them before we got into the store. The counter is there over which the goods were delivered. The shelves are there as of old. But there are no chairs placed around the old barrel-stove for “sitters” and no box of saw-dust for the tobacco chewers, who in the good old times could infallibly “hit it” from any location. No droll wit, no subtle humor, no political wisdom, no lore of weather prophecy, no “truth” about what will happen to you after death, no neighborhood news or gossip, circulate any longer around the stove—the glory has departed, the “light of common day” has come! The store has dropped to a mercenary level and exists solely for secular purposes. As a center of culture it has no standing!

How different it was in my youth and what should I have been without the formative influences of grocery store culture! We talk about “rugged individuals”, but the primitive fact is the social group, which in one form or another is the nursery where the individual’s life takes on its formative shape. There are naturally enough many types of social groups which leave their mark forever on the speech, the ideas

and ideals, the manners, habits, mores and character of the individual—especially his family, his school, his play-groups, et cetera, et cetera. Among all these group-forces I am concerned in retrospect to give a high place to the grocery store group. It was a strange nursery no doubt, but it *was* a nursery that nurtured.

There were about fifteen pretty regular “sitters”, but the number enlarged at mail-time in the evening and on rainy days when a nor’easter was on. The storekeeper himself was an essential feature of the group, usually not too busy to sit with the “pillars” of the village and to share his stock of wisdom. His son and successor was even more important, for he had served in the Civil War, had lived in Boston, had had a term in jail! He knew the world from inside out and had tales to tell about the ways of the world.

Then there was the “hero-sitter”, who had been at the “bloody angle” in the Gettysburg fight. We had the bugler, too, who had thrilled the Northern heart in many a battle. And to offset these heroes we had a “copperhead democrat” who was sure to raise the “bloody shirt” issue every time that undergarment was mentioned, or when any one happened to buy “shirting” at the dry goods counter.

Every "sitter" had his peculiar stock of wit and wisdom, and of course all political parties were represented and all forms of religion, including "nothing-arian" points of view, had defenders in the group. All the lore and stock of reminiscence of the village were gathered there and all the gems of humor were on display.

If it had not been for the fortunate fact that the post-office was in the store I should not so often have been allowed to share in this unique culture, for my mother and my wonderful Aunt Peace, who was a hundred horse-power saint, considered that, while the grocery store was undoubtedly a center of culture, it just possibly might not be the kind that would make their little boy's spiritual wings grow! But somebody had to go for the mail and it took a long time to get it sorted and delivered, and then one usually forgot to hurry home after he found that there wasn't any mail for his particular family, as was apt to be the case. It was, too, much "safer" on dark nights to stay until some neighbor, who was going in the same direction, could pilot the boy home through the dangers of the dark.

One night the trip home was peculiarly dangerous and there was special need of a neighbor

pilot. The discussion in the store parliament that evening had centered around the “supernatural”, and many awesome narratives had been related. Nearly every body in the group knew one or more instances of “supernatural happenings”. The line of the discourse finally turned upon the dire experiences of persons who had seen mysterious “lights” in places where no “natural” light could be accounted for. One “sitter” capped these narratives with his *chef d’oeuvre* event, which was told just before closing time. A man was driving home in the late evening and as he turned his horse from the main road into his private driveway he saw two bright lights burning near the ground, one on each side of the driveway. He hitched his horse and went back to examine the lights and to find an explanation for them. But they were gone when he got to the spot, and remained a mystery. The ominous fact was, however, that in three months he was *dead*, and the lights had been a warning of what was to happen. Anybody can understand why a boy would want a companion on the way home that night!

But that is not quite the end of the story. A few nights later, while the awe of this incident was still vivid, I woke up about midnight, alone in my bedroom, and saw a bright light, near

the ceiling of the room where in the days of oil lamps no "natural" light could possibly be. I dived under the bed-clothes hoping that if I hid my head *it* would vanish, but when I peeped out again there *it* was more realistic than ever. Then in a brave moment I did the most heroic act of my life. I got out of bed and drew a chair under the "light", climbed up on the chair and made a grab for the threatening light in the spirit of, "Here I stand: I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." I caught hold of an ear of seed corn which, unbeknownst to me, father had hung to dry from my room ceiling, and a moonbeam had fallen on it and produced the light. That experience delivered me forever from the terror of "supernatural lights" and it gave me a clue to the right way of approach to all similar mysteries of the dark. It has proved to be a priceless lesson. We had a "haunted house" not far from the grocery store, but I never was much afraid of the "haunt" after my experience with the "light". I felt pretty sure there was an "explanation" if one only had the luck to "tree it".

As soon as I got old enough for it, I used to walk down the road for a mile and meet the mail stage from Augusta. Then the kindly driver would stop and pick me up and let me

climb to the driver's seat and take the reins to guide the four flying horses through the village to the post office. The two leaders of the two spans were named "Samuel" and "Jimuel". I leaped off the driver's box when we reached the store and carried in the mail bags, and then joined the "sitters", ready for whatever "truth" might fall from the lips of the community fathers.

Something like this would happen: A man would come in dripping wet and tell his experience: "Well, you will wonder why I am so wet. I thought the ice would hold, and so I started skating down for the mail on the lake. The ice broke and in I went. I tried to climb out but every time th'ice broke, and I had to go on 'breaking ice' for nearly a quarter of a mile before I found any that would hold me. I got so hot in the water that I had to take off my overcoat!" Or this variant: "I was out fishing today and the old boat started leakin'. I wasn't goin' to be beaten by an old boat, so I took an auger-bit I had with me and bored a hole in the bottom of the boat to let the water run out. But the funniest thing you ever see happened, the water ran in, 'stead of running out, and swamped the boat and I had to swim for it". In the early spring we got this gem: "Well, I've

been tapping trees all day on th'other side of th' lake. I went over on th'ice and bored the holes in the maples with m'auger. I put in the spiles and put the pans under and th'sap started runnin' fine. On the way home across th'ice I remembered that I had my fishin' line in my pocket, so I bored a hole in th'ice with my auger and let down my line. In about five minutes I had a whoppin' bite and I pulled up a five-pound pickerel." There was a brief hush, when the matter of fact "sitter" said, "How'd you get him up through that inch hole?" "By gorry", the sap-borer said, "I hadn't thought of that!"

One day a man came along who had just had his hair cut, as a long needed luxury. One of the "sitters" looked up and remarked: "Hullo, John, had a hair cut, aint ye? Did you 'take gas'?"

But in between these dramas of native humor came long stretches of wisdom on current events in the great world. The election of Hayes and Tilden was "settled" many times in our store before the Commission finally settled it the wrong way according to our "copperhead democrat", but the right way according to the republican majority around the stove. But, first and last, every aspect of that critical election

was brought to light and threshed over in that assembly of "sitters".

James G. Blaine, who lived only twelve miles from our village, was "elected" President many times in this store town-meeting, only we could never make the country recognize the choice and get him installed in the White House. For twelve years he was our majority candidate and he was our local hero. One day the "great man" himself with a span of well-groomed horses, drove up to the store platform and stopped in front of the store. I happened to be standing nearest him, gazing in admiration, first at the hero himself and then at the spanking horses. "Sonny", he said, "do you suppose you could find a pail and give my horses a drink?" As a Quaker, I had never yet said "Sir" to any body and I couldn't begin all of a sudden to use "titles of honor", though here was my greatest living hero speaking to me, so I said: "It will give me great pleasure to bring water for thy horses, James G. Blaine". I ran with a pail to the old well sweep and brought each horse his drink. And then, instead of offering to pay me, which Mr. Blaine knew would be considered by any Maine boy an impossible breach of good manners, he chatted with me about the weather and the beauty of the lake and then drove on.

I was of course bursting with importance and for many days I was a near-hero in the community. I had talked with Blaine.

Not only were the policies of the nation "settled" around that stove, but all the major problems of Spring town-meeting were anticipated and debated in advance around the saw-dust box. There was rivalry between the north-enders of the town and the south-enders. And in these informal caucuses of the south-enders the "store sitters" laid their plans and mapped their policies and outlined the speeches which were to carry the day in the momentous Spring meeting. Here was a full-fledged working democracy where every man had his "say" and even those who were too young to vote counted for something.

About the time of the Blaine episode a "revival" of religion was in full swing in the village school house. Boards were put across the aisles from seat to seat and a capacity audience filled the house every night, as the visiting minister wrought conviction for sin in the hearts of his listeners, and as we sang the new Sankey hymns with a powerful swing of enthusiasm. Everybody "pulled for the shore". While the meetings lasted the grocery store was almost deserted. Only the hardened sinners of the com-

munity remained faithful to the stove-assembly and continued as a thin remnant to chew their cud. But as soon as the meetings were over, and the "revival" slipped into retrospect, the issues of religion came in for endless discussion in the restored group of "sitters". Doubters and believers had it out. The possibility of life after death, and the nature of the last judgment, and what would happen to hardened sinners who were untouched by the "revival" and the "means of grace", got threshed over with the same effectiveness and vigor that were displayed in the political battles. Professors of theological seminaries would have learned something if they had been there, at least they would have seen how to train rural preachers. The important point to note was that here you had "the rural mind" in full expression. Here one could see what ideas held sway in the thoughts of the rank and file. Anybody who could interest that group and sway them could "carry" the village, and, on the other hand, a person who discounted the importance of that group of "sitters" and had no convincing word for them might as well not try to preach in that community, for he could reach only the little handful of those who were already "righteous", and needed no physician.

One speaker in the group was giving his views in slow, dull fashion and too much at length, when a bored "sitter" with rural frankness said: "John, you've said enough. You aint got but one talent and hardly that!" On another occasion the "sitters" began to disperse while a discourse of some length was under way. "That's right", the speaker said, "that's right, as fast's you gets your heads full go out!" Here you got no school-theology, but you did get a cross-section of the community-mind on religion.

As I grew in stature and became a clear reader from my village school training, the assembled group used to mount me on the counter of the store and have me read important newspaper articles and party platforms to the men sitting on chairs and barrel-heads and boxes. When important events were absorbing the country I passed on the news and reports, as though I had been elected official reader for the community. On slacker occasions I read by request Mark Twain and Artemus Ward and other country favorites. I read the whole of Mark Twain's *Roughing It* to an enthusiastic and ever growing throng of "store-sitters". It was here on the counter that I first learned how to articulate clearly and to get ideas across effec-

tively to a body of listeners. They are all gone now, but I can still see those eager listeners as the boy transmitted to them the news and humor of the day. It was a great experience for me. I knew that that country group of stalwart farmers had picked me out to be their reader and entertainer and that, though only a boy, I "belonged" and was appreciated by the home group. I have crossed the continent a great many times, but I never traverse the bad lands, with their sage brush and coyotes and alkali pools, or stop in the towns which were once frontier posts, with their gambling dens and "bad men" shooting each other at sight, and the "vigilants" with their hangings, without having vivid revivals in memory of those days in the store reading *Roughing It* to the rapt listeners, as we wandered over a world so different from our quiet one and revelled in a wholly new type of humor. If those men were alive now they would be just as keen to hear me preach in the village—as I do now in the summer—as they were years ago to hear me read *Roughing It*.

Interruptions would come of course. Somebody would want two quarts of kerosene, or possibly a barrel of flour, which was usually "charged" on the store books. Or perchance an

odd visitor would break in on us and change the order of events. One day a tramp-looking man came in the door and signified that he was in great pain. "Have you any Jamaica Ginger?" he asked in an agonizing voice. The grocer's wife was behind the counter. She took down a bottle of Jamaica Ginger, removed the cork, put the bottle down while she reached for a spoon. The man seized the bottle, put it to his mouth and drank the entire bottle-full. "That will certainly kill him", the store-keeper's wife said. "Is there a grave-yard handy, mum?" the old toper asked and went on his way satisfied with the free "drink" he had secured. Here we learned a new use for Jamaica Ginger!

The village wag came in to say: "You know those candles I bought last week. Well, after they had burned about an hour, they wouldn't burn any longer". The puzzled store-keeper got out his stock of candles and examined them but could find no defect, and expressed great surprise over his customer's complaint. After due prolongation of the mystery, the wag said: "You see that after burning them an hour they wouldn't burn any *longer*, because they kept burning shorter". A boy came in with a head of snarled and dreadfully tousled hair. "My boy", some one said, "why don't you comb your

hair?" "I did *once*", the boy replied, "but it almost killed me, it hurt so."

The daughter of a well-to-do farmer came in one day and the store-keeper asked: "Are your hens laying?" "They can", the girl replied, "but of course in our financial position, they don't *have* to!"

One memorable night when the conversation had dropped to a dull level, or at least did not catch a boy's attention, one of the youthful group made the announcement that a neighbor, not far away, had just come home from the cider mill with five barrels of new cider, which he was leaving out in the cart all night. Instantly there was an exodus of boys. We found a stock of oat straws, climbed up on the cart, removed the bung of one of the barrels and all formed a compact circle about the bung-hole with the straws deep in the delicious juice. It was a most successful sucking party, operating in due silence. But alas, some of them unwisely began to talk and laugh. Suddenly the door opened and the furious farmer emerged with a hostile shout. The boys leaped out of the cart and ran in many directions for safety. In the process of leaving the cart the rear barrel—the one with the bung out—fell out of the cart and started rolling down the hill, with the cider

making a gurgle-gurgle noise as the barrel rolled along. The farmer concluded that it was better to save the cider than to take the chance of catching a lone boy and so we all escaped. We all regretted the wasted cider, but a man who put a temptation like that in front of a lot of town boys could hardly expect any different result than what he got. When we reported our escapade to the elders in the store they "backed" us with their approval and affirmed that we had lived up to the best traditions of the village. I am not as sure of that now as I was when the event occurred.

During my early youth the son of our store-keeper, and his successor to be, came home from his long period of "seeing life" in the army and in cities, and settled down, without any "fatted calf", to the dull round of a country grocery store. He had seen more of the world than any other dweller in our burgh and he had a corresponding list of tales to relate, and withal he had a vigorous vocabulary with which he punctuated his narratives. The important point for me and my story is that very soon I became his most intimate friend and companion. He was many years older than I was and it was of all things a strange and surprising friendship, but it never-the-less happened. He soon bought a

lordly sailboat, the finest on the lake, and made me sub-captain of it, with himself in command. I quickly mastered the technique of sailing and could take the boat anywhere in any weather. We explored every part of the lake. On one occasion we chased out a nest of "pirates", who were net-fishing the lake, and we sometimes carried off booty in our evening sails from orchards and melon-patches along the shore. Those things were not counted "sin" in those days, though the line of real transgression was hard to draw.

On rainy days I helped him in the store and on fine evenings we sailed together, with a small chosen band of companions. It was not exactly "a prayer-meeting" group, and the conversation was not elegant or choice. But the odd thing about it all was the fact that it formed an essential part of my education. I learned more about human nature and about what "life" means to a large part of our population, than I could have learned in any other way. It was all an advantage to me for my future career as teacher and preacher. It gave me illumination without giving any *taste* for the things I was hearing about. I understood without wanting to imitate. My parents were naturally anxious about me, but never lost confidence in my capacity

for recovery. The pious neighbors were more disturbed and assumed that I was going down hill on the primrose path. But I knew all the time that the strong cords of a deep faith and of a still deeper affection held me. The roots of life which were fed at home always held firmly in every crisis of wind and weather. I heard oaths constantly but I never used one. I was in an atmosphere of vulgarity but I got no harm from it, because I was thoroughly minded to keep clean. I learned then the important lesson that it is possible to be intimate with persons of a wholly different set of ideals from one's own, to share with them, enjoy things together, be good companions, and yet to maintain one's own ideals of life without being a prig, and to win at the same time the respect and even the affection of one's associates. I have been drawing all my life upon the assets of experience which I accumulated in this group of store-sitters and sail-boat companions. I had rather preach now to a rural community audience than to any other type of persons, because I understand their minds.

There is a story with many variants which came out of a community like ours. Some one asked a farmer what he was going to send to the "cattle show" in the autumn. "I aint got noth-

ing this year, not even a shoat, I could send", the farmer said. "Why don't you send your boy, he might get a prize?" The old farmer chuckled and turned to his boy and said, "Silas, how'd ye like to go to th' cattle show as a shoat?" "Wull, 'twouldn't do no good if I did, Dad, I shouldn't draw no prize". "Why not, Silas?" "'Cause I aint got no pedigree." One who is going to work successfully in a rural community must have a pedigree which roots back into such a community.

There is one more story with an application, which had its birth in our community. One of the farmers had no proper stock of tools and always borrowed of his neighbors on occasion. One day planning to kill a pig, he came to his nearest neighbor, discussed the weather and crops, and then casually asked: "Are you going to use your scalding tub today? I would like to borrow it. I am going to kill a pig." "You can have it." After a proper pause, he said, "How about your blocks and rope, will you be using them?" "No, you can have them." "Do you expect to be using your butcher knife? I should like to have that." "All right, you can have it." The neighbor had a half-witted farmhand who had been listening to this conversation with his mouth quizzically screwed up. The borrower looking at him said: "How about John? Do you

think I could have John to help me kill the pig?" Whereupon John drawled out: "Mr. Pearson, are ye sure ye got a *pig*'".

I am quite sure that what I have been writing here is my very own and not borrowed stuff. There are no such grocery stores now. There are few communities left like this one I have pictured. But it was real once. It is vivid memory now. And it was one of the best training schools for life I have ever found.

I GO TO SCHOOL

We have all heard lyric words about the little old red school-house among the blackberry vines, with the ragged beggar sunning himself on the steps. Perhaps it would not be amiss to have someone tell what went on inside and what kind of education was dispensed free gratis to the barefoot boys who swarmed in from the farms. Our school house was not red, for the painter had not come yet with his paint pot. There were no blackberry vines, no ragged beggar, but there were girls who didn't spell the word and go above us boys, either because they couldn't spell the word, or for deeper reasons which Whittier has so well interpreted in his poem. I was four years and six months old when, holding my little sister's hand, I first walked the quarter of mile down the road past the grocery store to school. It was summer and the big boys were not there, for they were needed on the farm for hoeing and haying. There was of course only one teacher, a woman,

and she managed all the “grades”, though that word was still unknown in our community. We had Scripture reading every morning, the Lord’s Prayer and a hymn, and then the classes began to come out in turn, the pupils sitting on benches just in front of my little seat, where I sat with vacant mind because I had nothing to do and no one to entertain me. It was some fun watching the boys and girls go to the blackboard, and with broken pieces of chalk (there were no crayons then) make figures all over the blackboard. Meantime another little boy nearby, unemployed and with ginger in his system, was “cutting up” and making a disturbance, “as ’twas his nature to”. The teacher stopped her explanation of “vulgar fractions” and said in a vigorous tone, “Elijah Elwood, if you don’t keep quiet I shall tie a string around your neck and hang you up to that nail!” I could imagine the scene with Elijah Elwood hanging six feet high, his feet dangling in the air, and I did not want the experience. I do not approve of that way of securing quiet, but it was very effective. I felt sure she meant business, and a kind of awe swept over me, and I sat still as a mouse, until I was called out for the Primer Class, with Elijah Elwood sitting by me, cowed into silence. There are two well known stories which I wish

I had known then, for I could have worked one of them off on my stern teacher, who had a string in her pocket! The first one relates how a little boy in a Primer Class was told by the teacher to say A. He said, "I am not going to say A. If I say A, you will want me to go on and say B". And he apparently dimly sensed the drag of the system, which would carry him irresistibly on to Z. This boy opposed "beginnings". The other boy—a Maine boy, too—was introduced to the alphabet by the teacher who pointed to the first letter and said in sweet tones. "That is A." "Thunderation. You don't say", said the boy, "is that A"?

Elijah Elwood and Minnie Johnson and I each meekly said "A" with no comment. We came back to our seats a little later with the first three letters indelibly fixed in our little minds. We had begun. Elijah Elwood and Minnie have gone where I presume the alphabet is not needed, but I am still using the same letters I learned in that Primer Class! I suppose it was the most momentous intellectual step I have ever taken. What a miracle it is that all of Shakespeare's Plays, the whole of the English Bible, Browning's *Ring and the Book*, and everything else I have ever read are made up of those letters I learned in that Primer Class!

The Reading Classes, from the Second to the Fifth Reader, were very interesting to me. I listened to the stories they read, and by the time I got old enough to read in this ascending Series I knew the selections almost by heart, and I can recite some of them now. At this early stage I was dismissed at noon and so avoided the more abstruse subjects which came in the afternoon, notably Grammar and parsing, consequently I went on using double negatives for some time yet. And I am sorry to say some members of the Grammar Class also did.

I slowly moved farther back in my seat year by year as I grew in stature of mind and body, and little by little I became a full-fledged school boy. One day, when I was still quite small, the Supervisor of Schools in the town came to call at our house on a friendly visit. I overheard him say, in conversation with Mother, how happy he was that Sidney Perham had been elected Governor of the State. I immediately tucked the fact away in my little head, hoping that it might sometime prove to be useful, as I have since learned that every item of knowledge sooner or later is sure to be. Well, the opportunity soon came. The Supervisor came soon after this to visit the school and "spy out the land". He made a little speech to us, and before

sitting down he asked whether anyone in school knew who was Governor of Maine. There was a pause and no answer when I proudly rose and said "Sidney Perham". "Well done, little boy", the great man said, and I went home "justified".

The winter school was very different from the summer one. There were two or three rows of big boys and girls in the back seats. They were somewhat "out of hand", and hard to manage, and there were frequently scenes of disorder. The teacher in the winter was usually a man, as muscle was considered to be almost as important as brains. But one of the best winter teachers we ever had was a woman, who was so wise and so endowed with insight into human nature that she had no need to resort to muscle action. She never threatened to hang up any little boys with a string, and yet she had us all perfectly obedient and attentive. The next winter we had a fine illustration of educational chaos. A tall, good looking man essayed to be our shepherd. He never had command of the flock. He knew enough in his head to guide our studies. He had a well trained mind. But from the first he lost control and was helpless in the presence of the difficulties of discipline. He threatened powerfully, but he could not

execute. The big boys laughed when he told them what he proposed to do to them *if*, but all the time affairs went from bad to worse, and one day in a crisis the big boys took him up and carried him out of the school-room, and his career—poor man—was over in that school. It was a memorable event in a boy's life.

His successor was a smaller man, who might easily have been "carried out", so far as weight and muscle were concerned, but it was very evident from the first day that he was in complete command of the situation. He had a huge *ruler* which lay on his desk, but he did not use it. He had a "green-hide" in a pocket made for the purpose, but he pulled it out only once to show that he had it, "against the day of trouble". We all very soon adored him, and under his guidance we began to take on new intellectual and moral stature. It was the same group of boys and girls. Their names had not changed nor their pedigrees altered, but they had felt the spirit of a man, and unconsciously they had come under discipline and could be led whithersoever this teacher wished to lead them. I made progress by leaps and bounds that year. I learned how to read intelligently and interpretatively. I began to "declaim pieces" before the school. I woke up to the thrill of conquer-

ing problems in arithmetic. And I travelled around the earth in the geography class, though we had neither maps nor a globe.

The best thing I learned then was the value of discipline, and the ease of securing obedience by one who possesses character and the rare quality of leadership. A man named "Sanders" made our Reading Books. That man knew how to select the best things that were available to cultivate the taste of the young reader's mind. I could repeat pages of those books before I left the country school, and many of the selections are still living in my memory. "The Burial of Moses"; "Bozzaris Cheers His Band"; "How Cyrus Laid the Cable"; "Little Blossom's Visit to Abraham Lincoln"; "The Skater and the Wolves"; "'Tis Iser Rolling Rapidly." The book is gone, but passages like these remain: "Ages hence the inquisitive white man as he stands by some growing city will ponder on the structure of the disturbed remains of the Indians. They will live only in the songs and chronicles of their exterminators".

"Up from Sparticus the bondman when
the tyrant's yoke he clave,
And from stalwart Wat the Tyler, Saxon
slave.

Still the old, old cry of Egypt, sounding
down through wilds of Edom:

‘Out of darkness, out of bondage; on to
Freedom, on to Freedom’.”

I remember one event which throws a beam of light on a trait of my character. My sister was a few minutes late one morning at school, and was not present at roll call. When her name was called and there was no answer, I burst into tears, so deeply did I feel the disgrace of having a member of my family *late*. I never was late to school myself, and lateness has always seemed to me to be an unpardonable failure.

In the winter we used to “carry our dinner” in a pail and eat it in the school-house at noon recess. The teacher was absent, and it was usually a noisy, boisterous occasion. We had no organized sports to occupy our minds and to give scope to our surplus energies, and the result was a mild pandemonium. If one had not already learned “bad manners”, here was a most favorable opportunity to find out how to pick them up. One boy, a few years older than I was, used to bring pumpkin or custard pie in his dinner pail, and he was apt to catch a smaller boy of my size and rub the superfluous custard or pumpkin in the little boy’s hair until it

was a "perfect mess". There were only two alternatives open. One was to tell on him to the teacher, but that did not fit our standards of honor. The other was to combine our youthful forces and give him a much deserved thrashing, but I could not get a large enough group organized to ensure victory. One day I walked up to him after an ignominious bath of custard pie and said: "I am too small to 'lick' you now, but some day I shall be bigger, and the first thing I am going to do, as soon as I am big enough, is to 'lick' you as you deserve". Well, the day came a few years later. I grew very fast at this stage of my life. I ran up in height and grew in toughness. I tried my strength in wrestling with other boys until I was confident of power, and then I tackled my big pie-man, threw him down, sat on him, and pommelled him, saying, "Remember what I owe you for the pie you rubbed into my hair. I am just going to give you what I told you once you were going to get, and when I am done we will be friends". And good friends we always were from that time on.

One great day, when I "played hooky", and was justified in doing it, stands out undimmed in memory. As we went out to recess that day we saw a house being "hauled" on the snow

with log shoes under it and with twenty or thirty yoke of oxen walking off with it. I knew that they were going to the lake with it and that it was to move two miles up the lake on the ice. My most intimate boy friend and I "made for" the house, went upstairs to the second floor and rode in this mighty palanquin up the lake to the new destination of the house, and then walked home, somewhat dubious about our standing with the teacher. We were called out the next morning to explain our absence. I vividly pictured the temptation which had overtaken us, and challenged the teacher with the query: "What could two boys like us be expected to do with a chance like that confronting us and calling us loudly to seize the opportunity?" He had fortunately been a boy once and he, remembering that I had never missed school before, forgave us on the spot and reinstated us.

One Spring, about closing time, the school put on an entertainment of major splendor, to which "the town and the country round" were invited. It was vastly too large for the schoolhouse, and so we chartered a hall on the third floor of the largest building in the village. This structure had long been considered unsafe, because its foundations were known to be in-

secure. Many who crowded the hall came in a state of fear of catastrophe—but they came. It was the largest audience I had ever seen, and I was to “speak” for the first time in my life to a “real audience”. The unexpected size of the gathering increased the latent fear that something would happen to this top-heavy building. Just before my “turn” came in the program, a man went to a back window of the hall to see if his horse was standing all right. He crashed through five or six panes of glass which had been piled unnoticed in a corner. It made a very loud noise, and someone who heard it, being already in a nervous state, shouted at the top of his voice, “The Hall is going over”. Instantly there was a stampede and a rush for the stairway. It was an awful moment, big with tragedy, when suddenly a level-headed man, with a stentorian voice and an authoritative manner, shouted: “Stop where you are. Every person sit down. The Hall is safe”. He was an ordinary carpenter. He had never met a similar crisis before. He had never spoken in public in his life. But he did just the right thing in exactly the right way and saved the day. I was back of the stage when it happened, about to be called on for my “piece”. The audience had been hushed into an awed

silence, and I was called out to speak. There was a wobble to my legs as I came forward, and a violent palpitation in the region of my diaphragm. But I pulled myself together, made my bow and delivered my first public speech without a break. The man who had "saved" the audience became from that day one of my staunchest friends.

When I was thirteen we had the good fortune to secure for a succession of years a teacher of very fine quality. He was not a scholar, but he had mastered the subjects which he taught, and he exercised a decided leadership over us. I became intensely interested in mathematics under his guidance. He launched me in Algebra, and I was soon fascinated in my search for "unknown quantities". We parsed the great lines of *Paradise Lost*:

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our
woe,

With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse,"

And I was thrilled with the organ music of Milton. This teacher of ours taught in the neigh-

borhood districts after our term of school was finished, and I followed him into "the Webber District" and then into "the Clark District," and grew and increased in intellectual stature beyond my years for a country boy. I was "soul hydroptic with a sacred thirst," and, wild and untamed as in many respects I was, I was bent on finding out what was in the scroll.

When I was fifteen—a few months before sixteen—I walked three miles from home each day, i.e., six miles the round trip, to a superior school in the neighboring village of Weeks Mills. What made it "superior" was the unique man who taught it. His name was A. I. Brown, and he was one of the greatest teachers in the State of Maine. He had come from Bowdoin College, leaving a luminous trail which always attended him. Here he was, a real man and great teacher within three miles of my home. When Minnie Johnson of my Primer Class, now grown to be an attractive girl, heard that I was going to sit at the feet of this local Gamaliel, she volunteered to go with me as a foot companion, and we made the double journey together each day. I am quite sure she wouldn't have "spelled the word" and "gone above me!"

My teacher proved to be all that I had imagined. He taught as one having authority, and I

rose up to meet him. Here began my study of Science—Physics and Physiology. We had no laboratory, no equipment, no experiments, but we had an inspiring teacher, and he made us *see* many things in our world we had never seen before. I could name all the bones in the body, and I could run off the wrist bones in a kind of rhythmical prose: “Scaphoid, semilunar, pisiform, cuneiform, trapezoid, trapezium, os magnum and unciform”, but it was a bit of truth which I have never been able to utilize effectively!

One episode of this search for learning stands out vividly in my memory. I was walking home alone one afternoon—Minnie had not gone that day—otherwise I should have no story to tell. I was trudging along, thinking how long the walk was going to be, when a boy somewhat older than I, and considerably larger, came driving by with a horse and wagon. He had two other boys on the wagon seat with him, but nobody in behind. I knew that he lived in another town from mine and that he was somewhat “allergic” to me, but I assumed that any boy in our school would give a ride to a school companion on the way home, so uninvited I leaped in behind, where there was good standing room. He shouted to me to “get out”, but as

I didn't obey, he rose up to push me out. I anticipated his movements and gave *him* a push. He was not well balanced, and out he went to the road, and, to my horror, the wheel of the loaded wagon went over his body. Fortunately he was not much hurt and got up in a very angry mood, saying in vigorous language, "I shall give you a tremendous thrashing to-morrow". I walked home knowing that to-morrow was to be a day of battle. School went on as usual the next day, until recess came. Many of the boys knew that something was to happen, and we had most of the school as spectators. My angry opponent did not find it as easy to administer his thrashing as he had expected, and we were at indecisive grips with one another when our famous teacher appeared on the scene. He took us both into the school house and made us sit together, in front of the school, holding hands the rest of the forenoon! We rose when it was over, shook hands and were always good friends ever after.

The next Autumn I went a step higher, and for eleven weeks I attended Oak Grove Seminary. It was ten miles from my home. It had been founded in 1854 by a small group of Quaker leaders, one of whom was my Uncle, and he had served as an early Principal of the

Seminary. Two of my cousins, both of whom became famous as educators, had been Principals of the Seminary, before my time. During my period the Principal was a graduate of Haverford College, a good scholar, but not a teacher of distinction, though there were two excellent teachers on the staff. The great grove of oak trees, after which the Seminary was named, was still standing, though they were all cut for ship timber during my term. They were crashing down, one after the other, before the woodman's ax. Impressed by the danger, I went to the Principal and told him that men were "falling" trees nearby and I thought the pupils should be warned to "have a care". He announced at morning collection that a boy had told him that men were "falling" trees but that the boy should have said "felling trees", and in my embarrassment I learned a new word, though I probably saved nobody's life by the warning.

Vassalboro, where the Seminary was located, on a hill of glorious vista, overlooking the sweep of the Kennebec Valley, was at the time a significant Quaker Center. In 1774, one year before Benedict Arnold's famous march up the Kennebec to the assault on Quebec, David Sands—coming on horseback from Long Island

—had planted Quakerism throughout the region. A large Meeting-House stood a few rods from the Seminary, in which there were occasions of profound silence and also occasions of old-fashioned rhythmic preaching of too great length. One incident out of the past made a deep impression on my mind. When the meeting-house was new, David Sands had come back on a visit to revive the flock which he had established, and was holding an appointed meeting in the new meeting-house. Not far away lived a man of no religious faith, who was classed by the pious as an “infidel”. On this particular occasion he was riding by the meeting-house on horseback, bent on going to the village for his mail. As he drew near the meeting-house he was powerfully impressed that he ought to stop and hear the great preacher, but he would not yield to “the call”. Finally he threw the reins over the horse’s neck, saying: “If you turn in to the meeting-house drive I will go to meeting, and if you keep on the direct road I will go for the mail”. It seemed to be a safe venture, as his horse always went “direct” and never frequented the meeting-house road. But contrary to all expectation this time the horse turned in. The man dismounted, tied his horse, slipped into the house and sat by the stove at the very

back. David Sands was preaching, in the midst of his sermon. Pretty soon he stopped for a moment, stood perfectly still, then he said solemnly, "It would have been well if thou hadst left it to thy horse years ago". He proceeded to preach a straight message to someone unsaved. The visitor was reached by the searching words, became a faithful member of the Meeting, and later a favored minister whose son in his old age told me the story.

There is another scene which I myself vividly remember. There was an all day meeting in progress, with a large attendance present. The morning meeting was drawing to an end. A Friend rose to give out the announcement for the afternoon. Then he engaged in a closing prayer. As he was praying he suddenly remembered that he had neglected some notices. And these words came into his prayer: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that there is plenty of food for all who wish to stay for dinner and Thou knowest, O Lord, that there is hay in the shed behind the meeting-house for all the horses!" And so by the way of heaven we learned these facts of earth—in a prayer really addressed to the congregation—as prayers so often are.

At this period many of the older boys and girls who attended the Seminary "boarded

themselves". This meant, for example, that two boys rented a room in the boarding hall, and brought with them from home food enough to last from Sunday evening to Friday afternoon. I was one of these "self-boarders". My father drove over the ten miles to bring me and my room-companion home on Friday afternoon, and the family of my companion brought us back Sunday evening. My mother cooked food enough to carry me through the week and packed it in a huge box for my return trip. We had an "air-tight" stove in our room, on which we could boil eggs and make coffee and do other simple cooking, but most of the food was eaten cold. The plan was a sad mistake, and should not have been allowed, but how a farmer's son who had no money anywhere in sight could have managed on any other plan I have no way of telling. We lived through it and we progressed—and we did not quite ruin our digestion. One boy in a nearby room gave us a surprising laboratory experiment. He was getting his breakfast. In the process he put an egg in a quart can half full of water, put the cover on tight and set it on the stove to boil. And boil it did! The cover was so tight that it held the steam until it condensed and produced a high pressure. Then suddenly there was an explosive

noise, the cover blew off, and the egg was catapulted to the ceiling, where it remained in a mighty splash.

One event may be recorded out of the many experiences. There was a superintendent who had charge of discipline at night. He meant well, but did not possess the gift for his task. The boys one day picked up two bushels of acorns. That evening a frightful disturbance occurred on the second floor of the boarding hall: The superintendent ran out and started upstairs. Suddenly a bushel of acorns came rolling down the stairs, and the dear man slipped and tumbled as he slowly climbed toward the scene of the noise. When he finally got to the top, the disturbance broke out on the third floor, and he proceeded to climb the second flight when another bushel of acorns on the stairs impeded his progress, and everybody was quietly in bed when he arrived.

Apart from this antique boarding arrangement the term of school was a marked success. I began Latin. I was fascinated with quadratics. I made distinct progress in the mastery of English and Public Speaking, and, perhaps most important of all my achievements at this stage, I studied astronomy. We had no telescope, no observatory, no proper instruments, but we had

an excellent teacher who knew how to get honey out of a rock. She knew the constellations and the stars of the first magnitude. On clear nights she took us out to star-gaze and passed on to us all that she knew of the starry heavens and the path of the Zodiac. Like Kant I was filled with "unutterable awe". I have often thanked her in my mind as I have watched the stars over many lands on the globe and have realized how much she made me feel at home with the sky. More than that, she taught me so well that in my Junior year in college I passed off the examination in astronomy without taking the course and got a mark of 95. That winter I attended District School at home, where I went on with my Latin, mostly by myself, as my teacher, like Shakespeare, knew "little Latin", and I studied "double entry" book-keeping, for which I have always been thankful. I learned enough Latin in these two terms to join the class in Caesar when I entered Providence Friends School the next autumn and from which I graduated in two years.

The following Spring—1879—my father and I were planting potatoes in our "pond-field", when I stopped and leaned on my hoe in true boy fashion and intimated to my father that I was meditating a momentous step. He stopped

and waited for me to expound my secret. "Father", I said, "I want to go to Providence this autumn to school." He looked surprised and said, "I should think thee had education enough. In any case there is no money to be found for such an expense as that". Of course I knew without being told that there was no money in our meager exchequer. I told my father that I had a plan that might work, even without money and without price, and he gave me a free hand to go ahead with it. That evening I wrote an application for a scholarship in this famous Quaker school. Two other boys from our section made similar applications, and I knew that in all probability only one of us would be chosen—"one would be taken and the others left". In great suspense I waited to see which it would be. One memorable evening there was a letter in box 52 and it was for me, and it said that a full scholarship, covering board and tuition, had been granted to me for one year. I found out many years later how it came about. The names of the applicants were read to the School Committee, and when my name was reached, a prominent member of the Committee from Lynn, Massachusetts, said: "I know that boy's mother, and she has told me a lot about this boy, and I want him to have a

scholarship". And she never ceased her spontaneous efforts until the Committee acquiesced and granted the desired prize. That of course was an epoch, a great divide.

I am not concerned now to recount what happened beyond that watershed. I have been telling here the story of my stage of education in my local community. Clever writers and high-brow educators have made fun of the rural school and the old red school-house. I am an advocate on the other side. I owe an enormous debt to my local community school. It did not correct my local pronunciation of common words like "road", "boat" and "coat". It did not eliminate my redundant *r* on words like area (pronounced "arear"). My speech for a long time "bewrayed" me. The local school did not, as it should have done, teach me to know the wild flowers and the birds in my native habitat. But it gave me an undying passion for knowledge, for truth. It trained my mind in the exactness, the "must be so", of mathematics. My foundations were well laid. I had learned to love poetry and fine prose, and I had learned how to read expressively and to speak before an audience. I had come under the significance of discipline, and I knew by instantaneous insight the quality of character in a teacher and also

in a boy or girl with whom I worked or played. I was ready for the next advance, and my community had done that for me.

It was while I was still in this old country school that I began to see—even if only dimly—that it is not enough for life to draw out the mind and to inform it. I saw then, however dimly, that I must die to my old narrow self-centered self and be born to a higher and wider self; that I must give up my loose unchartered freedom and find my area of freedom in the life of society, in which everybody's freedom must be respected. I saw that building a life meant constantly rebuilding it, that achieving freedom meant constantly rewinning it in the face of difficulties. That is the significance of my parable story of the man who lost off his hind-wheels and could not change the contour of the world until he reconstructed his whole internal system. That is also the significance of my parable-story of the stone-wall that was higher than ever after it blew over. It is illustrated, too, by the story of the little country boy who was asked by a pedestrian how far it was to a certain village, "It is twenty-five thousand miles", the wise little boy said, "the way you are going. It is five miles if you turn round."

If my little book could get this truth about life into the heart of the world, I should be very glad that I had “dropped my anvil” and told the story.

WHAT I ACQUIRED AT PLAY

Play is one of the oddest of all our human activities. It bakes no puddings, butters no parsnips, and adds nothing to the family assets. But it is one of the greatest of the nurturing forces of group-life, and it contributes to health and sanity and joy to an almost unparalleled degree. It depends on surplus energies. No surplus energy, no play. The German children who were deprived of proper food by the blockade in 1917-18 lost the power to play. They did not go out of school at recess time, or, if they did, they leaned up against the school-house and waited listlessly for the bell to ring to call them in. Play is an overplus, a gratuitous addition to life—something thrown in, like beauty, as a free gift to life. No one expects to extract permanent returns from play; to make it stand and deliver a grist. Play is just play. It is an end in itself, its own excuse for being.

But I am concerned to point out how it ministered to my inner being, how it contributed to the making of my personality—my inner and

eternal me. In any case, it was implicit education, not explicit or premeditated. It gave direction to important habits. It formed significant tendencies. It fed the subconscious, or the unconscious, rather than furnished overt assets to be cashed in. Everybody who played with me in my early youth is gone from the earth, and I alone am left, like Job's reporters, to tell about it. The first one to go was a boy named Charlie, with whom I learned to play croquet where the community church now stands. He was one of my first boyish affections; always a swimming companion, at the stage when we swam with a board underneath to give assurance. Then one day he suddenly died of some swift illness, now unknown to me. It was the first death I remember of anyone for whom I cared. In fact it was the first time death really meant *death*. Here was a boy with whom I played nearly every day, who would never play with me again. I went with many other boys to the funeral—the earliest one I remember—I saw Charlie for the last time, perfectly still, very white, and lying embedded in flowers, whose fragrant smell still recurs to me at odd moments and brings back with it the white face of my lost boy friend. I can still see across the years the little jacket he wore.

The earliest and the most important member of my play-group was the son of our nearest neighbor, whose Mother was my Mother's dearest friend and companion. My first memory of him is when I was four, and from that time until I went away to school at sixteen, we were almost constantly together on play occasions. The next most important member of the group was Charlie's brother, who was a year older than Charlie and just my age. He was strong and powerfully built, full of vigor, alert, fertile in suggestions and always the same good fellow. We wrestled together a great deal, as healthy boys do, and we were about equal in such contests, but it was always friendly "fighting" and never attended with anger. I do not remember one single instance of a break in friendship with either of these boys. There were ten or twelve others who could usually be counted on to form a play-group—I do not like to say "gang"—but there were no others quite so essential as these two indispensables I have mentioned.

The early years from four on are rather dim and shadowy now. Somewhere in that dim early period we all learned to swim, to paddle, to row and to skate, and of course to coast on improvised sleds was a feature of winter life. I taught my nearest neighbor playmate to say

“thee” and “thy”, so that he could go to heaven with me in case we died, even though he was not a Quaker by birth as I was. I need hardly add that that idea originated wholly with my little childish mind and had no encouragement from my family, but I undoubtedly did think at a very early age that God took peculiar delight in hearing us say “thee” and “thou” and “thy”, for it was the language everybody used in prayer to Him. I supposed it was the language of heaven. We had to drive our cattle—cows and steers and oxen—every morning a long way round, through the village and up the Belfast road to pasture, and back again at night. The boys early formed the custom of joining me on this diurnal expedition. We soon had a great variety of incentives to speed the cattle on their trek back and forth. We created darts and slings and sling-shots and bows and arrows, by which we hastened the slowly moving herd, inclined too often to feed by the roadside. In potato-ball time we used to fasten a potato-ball on the end of a limber stick, or withe, and we could hurl it with vigor and accuracy to wake up a dilatory cow. It was a noisy process, bringing home the cattle, but it was great fun and a popular sport.

In an evil hour I besought my Father to teach

me how to milk. It looked like fun as I watched him do it, and I wanted to master the trick. He met me more than half way and took advantage of my enthusiasm. The moment I acquired the skill, I was caught. From being fun, it quickly became required duty. Instead of going off with a rush as soon as the cows were "corralled", I found myself conscripted to sit on a stool and fill a ten quart pail. It became rapidly a bore. A recent cartoon in *Punch* showed a farmer boy milking, and a militant woman leaning over the fence, saying in fierce tones: "Why aren't you at the front?" And the milker calmly said: "'Cause there ain't no milk at that end". I knew very early which "end" to assault for results, and I have never forgotten how to milk, any more than I have how to swim. A few years ago I spent ten days in a "Retreat" on the sacred mountain in China, "Taishan", where we had seven goats for our milk supply. A missionary's wife and I did the milking, and, though I had never milked a goat before and had not milked a cow for many years, the milk streamed forth at my first grip.

My group of boys who had assisted in the trek from the pasture lined up on the top rail of the barnyard fence and waited as a patient group until I was free and could join them in

the next expedition, which in summer was pretty sure to be a swim at the old pine stump on our shore. Most of the boys I regularly played with were not farmers' sons, as I was, but enjoyed a much wider area of freedom than I did, and they were almost always ready to help me finish a task so that when it was done I could join them in play, for which I was never too tired. In threshing time, which was the most miserable of all our recurrent tasks, there would almost always be a bevy of boys milling around, pitching down oats, or taking away straw at the tail of the machine, hurrying on the disagreeable job, so that I could get away so much earlier for some play scheme which we had concocted. They would have "whitewashed the fence", as Tom Sawyer's boys did, if it would have released me from toil for some mild escapade with them. When the boys appeared in solid formation Father always knew that he was soon going to "lose" me to the majority party. There is a story of a small boy who was weeping piteously and could not be comforted. He was accosted by another boy who said: "What's the matter with you? What are you crying like that for?" "My dog has been run over and killed; boohoo. I can't bear it. He was such a dear; boohoo." "I don't see why you make such a

fuss over a dog", the second boy said. "My Grandfather has just died, but you don't see me wailing and howling over it, do you?" "I know", said the broken-hearted boy, "but you didn't raise your Grandfather from a pup!" That is just the secret. We boys had come up from the roots in the soil. We all "belonged". We were raised here from "a pup", and the land and the wind and the lake were in our blood. We were as much a part of it all as was the sky over us.

The "out of doors" sport that most often held the stage was what we called "guard's clear". It is a game of many names in many lands and it is probably as old as Methuselah's boys, but it is or was one of the best games ever invented for a rainy day. On wet occasions we always "invaded" a barn, while on summer evenings we played it around an uninhabited set of rambling buildings, near the grocery store. The procedure was to "count out", which I by the choice of the boys always did. That settled who would be "It" for the first round. The unfortunate boy who was "It" stood at the goal, always pronounced "gool", where stood the "guard", which was a long stick placed slanting-wise against the wall. His first function was to count a hundred slowly and fairly.

While he was "counting" the other boys hid. Then he who was "It" began his search for the hiders. As fast as he found them they came and lined up at the "gool". Meantime while the goal-keeper was away on a hunt for more boys, some uncaught boy would break away from his hiding, touch the goal, seize the "guard" and throw it or kick it as far as ever he could. Then all the boys who had been caught up to that time were "free", could hide again, and the poor Sisyphus had to begin all over. The experts knew all the hiding places and took no chances of seeking for distant "caches" until all the near ones had been cleared, but a newcomer, less *au fait* with the lie of the land, might be "It" for hours, in fact for an entire evening. Our own barn was an admirable place for this game. The big haymows had a way of settling under the great beams, and one who knew these tunnels could make remarkable get-aways. Then the barn had a mysterious cellar with a curious exit up through the haymow, so that one moment you were in the cellar, and then as quick as you could say Jack Robinson, you were on top of the haymow or under a beam in the heart of the haymow. We always had early harvest apples hidden in pockets under these beams, which made them still more ad-

vantageous as hiding places for those who were in the secret.

But "Uncle William's" barn was even better than ours. It was the most complicated barn in ten counties. It had been built, like the English Constitution, to meet the growing needs of new occasions. There were many levels, unexpected corners, sheds, lean-tos, dark holes, forgotten pockets, tie-ups, sheep-pens, scaffolds, stairways and numerous ladders. The boy who got chosen as first guard-keeper on a rainy day in that barn was just out of luck, for he was likely to be still at it when noon dinner time came. But the counting out—"eeny, meeny, miney, mo"—was fairly done, and when a boy was chosen to be "It" he took his fate calmly and stuck it out until success set him free in a legitimate way and laid the new burden on the first one of the hidens caught who took the next turn. "Uncle William's" barn was long ago laid low in ashes, and *our* barn blew down in a hurricane, and "the uninhabited house" where we played evenings is now a happy home, and nobody now plays "guard's clear". I am glad I was a boy a long time ago!

We had another game which we called "playing truck". It was something like "hockey", only it was played with a stout truck, sawed

from a birch log, about a foot in diameter, instead of a ball. The truck was rolled with powerful muscular force toward the opposing side, and it could be returned and forwarded toward the enemy's goal only so long as it was kept in rolling position. It was played with heavy shinny-sticks and it was about as dangerous as football—but a game with a thrill to it. Now it also is out-moded.

I realize now in retrospect, though I did not sense it at the time, that the boys treated me as their leader. They always came for me and waited for me until I was "free" to go, and helped to get me "free". They waited for consultation before deciding on the program for the day or the evening. They invariably asked me to "count out". And they looked to me for guiding direction or for decisive suggestion. But I was quite unconscious that I was their "leader", and I think that they were equally unconscious of it. It was a complete democracy. We were all equals. We acted as a unified group. We did not quarrel; we played with a corporate harmony, as would be the case with a brass band, but they looked to me as "leader", though I was never elected to the position, and neither the boys nor I would have liked the term, if anybody had suggested it. We were

naive. We were in the happy stage before self-consciousness or ambition comes into play to disturb the course of events. Our processes were implicit rather than explicit, and that is one sufficient reason why we were so happy together.

This mutual fellowship of ours had a profound influence on our health of mind. We did things and said things and heard things that were not always wise or nice. We were the usual run of boys. But in the main we were living, finding ourselves, throbbing with activity, with discovery. We were unconsciously happy. There was an element of inspiration in what we did, a flare of radiant energy. I was confronted with many physical handicaps as a boy and might easily have been a victim of disease, but this health of mind, this free and joyous group action, had a powerful effect on my body and helped to lay the foundations of physical strength and of an optimistic outlook on life, which was better than an inherited fortune, which obviously I did not have! This fellowship did much to cultivate a spirit of daring, of adventure, of courage. We walked high beams with balance and steady head. We climbed perilous roofs and walked the ridgepoles. We visited Indian camps in the woods and bought bows and arrows of real Indians, in

real tents, in real woods. We dived off bridges into brooks with our clothes and boots on, to get ready for an emergency, if we should capsize when sailing, or in a canoe. We went out sailing on cakes of ice, when the "break up" of the lake came, after the marvelous vernal equinox. We ventured out on thin ice in the early freeze-up of the lake, daring one another to see who could carry a stone the farthest out on the ticklish bending ice, leaving it where we reached the limit of our dare, and challenging the next boy to outdo our daring. Eventually a limit was reached, and in the end a boy who overdid broke through, fell in and found his way back, after breaking ice, to safety and got home dripping wet with ice-water—but something of a hero to the boys, though usually not to his "valet", who being interpreted was his mother. We were absolutely at home on the water, in the water, on the ice or through the ice, in the woods, or in the snow. There were few challenges which we did not accept.

A rumor was circulated that "pirates" from Waterville were violating the law by using nets to catch fish in great quantities for market. There was danger that the lake would be combed of fish. The nets were pulled at night and no one knew where they were. We or-

ganized a flotilla of boats, each one supplied with a grapnel, and we spread out in wide formation to sweep the lake as we rowed lengthwise of it. We went first to the "Outlet", about four miles, with no results. We came back through the "Narrows", where the water was deepest, with no victims. Then we started north with our grapnels. Everything was peaceful until we got in sight of the uppermost island when we saw two men, who had spied us and fathomed our intent, pulling up nets for dear life, and trying to make an escape before we could reach them. We had revolvers and old muskets and we began firing, but, of course, in the air or on the water where we were sure not to hit them. They quite naturally took immense fright, rolled up their nets which were stretched entirely across the lake to both shores from the island. We gained on them and caught them as they pulled to the shore with their boat full of nets. They were completely scared as the array of boys surrounded them, and they promised us never to come back to the lake, if we would let them go unharmed, which we generously did, and then we rowed home with a sense of victory in our tired bodies. There have been no "pirates" on the lake since.

About two miles up the lake there was a

beautiful island named "Round Island", *alias* "Birch Island". It had in early times been believed to contain gold, and it was dug over by "prospectors" before the birch trees covered it. The "gold" was found in large quantities, but it proved to be "pyrites", that is "fools gold", and no one made a fortune from it. There grew up in my time a tradition that nobody owned it, and that if we slept on it one night a year for fifteen consecutive years—and proved our claim—we should own it as ours by "squatter rights". We might easily have discovered that it was properly owned, as I have done in later life—by a search in the County Record Office in Augusta, but that is not a boy's way. He accepts and trusts the tradition and proceeds to make good his claim. It was an admirable place for evening sweet-corn roasts. Sweet-corn abounded within easy distance; so did wood for the fire and stones for the stove on the island itself. Hemlock boughs and a warm blanket were all that was needed for the night—and one "squatter" claim was tallied.

Even better was a visit to Bradley's Island, where there was a bowling alley, and we all knew how to bowl and how to set up pins. Best of all, however, was a trip to Indian Heart. This was a rock on a beautiful wooded point,

on the face of which the Abenaki Indians had cut a large heart as a mysterious symbol, the key to which was lost. There is the heart unmistakably, gouged out with their stone tools, at a spot where an echo repeats itself four times over, and where there is an almost unsurpassed sylvan beauty. It was our favorite resort on the lake. Thither we went in as many boats as we could command, and ate a vast amount of hot fish chowder cooked on a crane over a fire in a stove of stones. The mother of one of our boys—the best fish-chowder creator the human race has yet known, according to our united judgment—always went with us to produce the delicious dinner. While this dear woman was preparing the perch-chowder we withdrew to a secluded glen and had a swim, which put us in fine trim for the best dinner the world has seen. There may be better things in some other world, but in this sublunary one there has never been anything better than those glorious days at Indian Heart. *They* can never come back!

In the winter we had three top joys. I should put first breaking roads through the snow drifts. It was done with the old-fashioned “heater”, which was a flatiron shaped snow-plow—hence the name “heater”. It was drawn by from four to six yoke of oxen, and all the boys of my group

would pile on for ballast. We wore "long-legged" boots, made by Elijah Elwood's father. There were no "sweaters" then, but we were well bundled up for below-zero weather. We helped with the shoveling when we came to a jumbo drift, and then the "chief" of the snow-plow would call out, "every man to his ox and every ox to his bow. Give one almighty pull", and we would plunge through the huge drift, with "tons of boys" holding down the "heater". Now it is all done with a tractor or a "caterpillar", and no boys! What a drop! The next best fun was skating on the lake with a pine-stump fire at night. The whole region had once been a vast forest of venerable pines. When it was "cleared" the roots of the pine stumps had been cut around and the stumps pulled out by "strings" of oxen, and either built into fences—"bull-strong, pig-tight and sheep-high"—or dumped along the shore in tangled piles. The roots were full of pitch, and time with its all consuming power had during the years only dried them, with no touch or blight of rot. They were plainly enough designed for a skater's fire. It was a day's job to pull them out of the tangled pile, push them to the desired spot and build the pyramid. It could not be done until the ice was very thick—at least twelve inches—

otherwise the ice would melt and plunge the pyramid into the deep, and possibly carry some unwary boys down into the melted cavity with it. What a joy it was in the evening to skate and play what we called "coram" around a fire as majestic as a house on fire, though of three times the length of endurance of a burning building. One never knew when to go home on such evenings.

The other winter sport, outdoors, was of course coasting. There were no skis, no toboggans, no double-runners, no pull-ropes to bring you back after the descent. But we had sleds of a kind, and, to make the affair "corporate", we took a "pung", a large family sleigh, and put a skillful boy on a sled between the shafts or thills to steer it. We could load ten or fifteen boys into the "pung", and if there was a crust we could go for a mile at an unbelievable speed. Our best "slide" was down a hill in front of the "narrows", where we struck the lake at a fearful pace, and on good ice we could go all the way—more than a mile—to Bradley's Island. Then we walked back!

There were plenty of other things to do in the winter—tunnel through drifts, make caves in the snow, build bridges out of snow blocks, go lumbering in the woods, etc., but nothing

quite matched these three sports. In the early spring we had a water-wheel which a few of us had made together. We dammed a small brook and produced water power, which turned the water-wheel. This was connected by a belt with a home-made circular saw that would actually saw a potato in two, though it balked at more solid substances. But the highest moment in the spring, after tapping maples, was going "pickerelling". This always happened when the ice began to break up around the shore, about the time that neighbor Noah Jones made his last dangerous trip across the lake on the ice, jumping his horse on and off at the shores. We had an iron fire basket which we filled with pitch-pine knots from the old stumps. It was hung out over the water at the end of the boat, and one boy lay on his stomach at the front end, near the light, while two boys at the other end silently paddled the boat in among the coves. The pickerel lay unmoving like great sticks, dazzled by the light. It took some skill, but not too much, to plant a three-pronged spear in the neck of the mute pickerel and to bring him into the boat for another boy to dislodge. It was obviously cruel sport, though the cruelty did not occur to our minds, bent as we were on the feast that was to follow. "Smelting" and "suckering"

came about the same time, soon after the ice went out of our two brooks. One of these brooks—the one we called “Tannery Brook”—already referred to—was an endless resource for us boys. We learned to row there. At its mouth was a beautiful “sandy bottom” for wading and early swimming, before the sense of danger was eliminated. Here we fished when we had no boat, and here we gathered “pollywogs” and turtles. I always wondered where the brook came from. Like Alf, the sacred river, it “ran through caverns measureless to man”. Nobody that we knew had ever explored its source and origin. It was mysterious as the Ganges or the Amazon. I organized an exploring party, and we traced the brook through many pastures and alder clumps on into the woods. It bent and wound with many curves in among the ancient trees. There were thickets of wild blackberries and ground junipers, and finally we found its source in a vast “bog”, which we now know has underneath it a submerged lake forty feet in depth, and once, ages ago, this brook of ours, now shrunken, connected the two lakes and did a thriving business. The brook runs close by the graveyard where some of my boy friends lie in quiet peace. The others are far away in equally quiet resting places. Soon after I went

away to school most of the boys scattered to their diverse careers and their varied experiences and fates. We never were together again and only rarely did any of us find one another. Two or three remained at home, but the more ambitious and daring ones sought their fortunes far away from the early scenes. I hope that our youthful years of play together built as much into their lives as was the case with me. There were some things to regret, but not many. For the most part our group-life together formed the habits of our later life, shaped our characters, gave us our expectations and ambitions, and every one of us, I am convinced, carried away permanent assets from those healthy, happy, joyous years of fellowship and play.

In one of our Quaker Meetings an old man was giving his "testimony". He said: "I shall never forget the dying words of my brother. He raised up his head and said—he raised up his head and said". Then after a pause the old man said: "I am sorry, Friends, but the words have gone from me". I can easily understand his dilemma. The things one knew he would "never forget" somehow slip away and are unexpectedly "gone" from the memory. I have only picked up a few pebbles, as Isaac Newton would say, while an impenetrable ocean of events

stretches out of sight. But it is an ocean that I sailed over once, and it was a great voyage with a splendid band of sailors and companions. Charles Hamilton Sorley, in one of his fine poems written in his youth, says: "I have a self I never yet have met". We all have the familiar self which all our friends know. But there is in us all a deeper inner me which nobody else knows. My group of boys, as we played together and did daring things together, helped me to build secretly and silently the hidden inner self which they very little suspected.

SOME OF THE "PILLARS" OF THE VILLAGE

Our village in its pristine glory before it was laid low by two devastating fires was a beautiful one. The double row of ancient elms almost met overhead and gave the village a rare Gothic glory. There were four stores at the "corner", and a hotel of some pretensions a few rods from the junction of the roads. But two night fires in my early youth ended the "Gothic glory", reduced the stores to one and left us no hotel. We lost twenty-one buildings in one holocaust which no boy of nine could ever forget.

The real distinction of the place, however, did not consist in elm trees or stores or hotels, or in any thing fires, or moth or rust, or thieves and incendiaries, could consume. In the New Jerusalem there was a Book of Life, which was more important than trees on either side of the river, and those persons were fortunate whose names were in it. In my mind I have been going over the names of those who would have

been in our book of life if anyone had thought to keep such a book. As we always called everybody by first names, I shall follow that custom in making up the list of our Hall of Fame.

The first man in the list was Ambrose—not the saint by that name, but just an ordinary good man. He was one of the founders of the Bank, in the days of the Bank; one of the Charter members of the Library Association and the custodian of the Library, the owner of one of the stores and the rich man, the aristocrat, of the village. He was like Melchizedek in the Bible in that he had no ancestors that anybody knew about, and he had no offspring to continue his line and his fame. Of course, the finest elm tree was in front of his store, but on the other hand his store was one of the first buildings to go down in the great fire, and with it went the library, except the books that happened to be “out” that week, which fortunately for me included most of Oliver Optic’s stories. He dressed better than most of our citizens. He wore a white vest on occasion and a tall hat. He had money to lend, of course only on good security, which usually meant your farm. The reason I am sure he was a “good man” is that Uncle Eli loved him and believed in him and worked with him for good causes.

Mark was a much more humble man, just "a common man", not an "evangelist" like his original name-bearer. He had had the fingers of one hand sawed off in a saw-mill, which left him with a queer stump hand and an opposing thumb. As he was naturally "light fingered" it was fortunate for us that he had only four fingers. His farm—an excellent one, and one that my grandfather cleared—joined ours and in busy seasons he "changed work" with us, that is, he worked with us and then we turned about and helped him. He always did our "butcher-ing" and we helped him when he laid his hog low. He was a good neighbor, kind, helpful, co-operative, everyway friendly, but pretty sure to steal something if there was a chance for it. It wasn't because he needed what he took. He had money in the Augusta bank and was a prosperous farmer. I suspect he was what we now call a "kleptomaniac", though we didn't have the convenient word for it then. We almost always "caught him", carrying off our crow-bar, or a bushel of apples, or corn from our upper field, but these recurrent thefts did not in any way interrupt our friendly relations with him. He crawled under the fence at the Fair-ground one day and was "caught" at it, and made to wear a placard on his back all that day. In every other

respect he was a perfect neighbor and I enjoyed sitting in his kitchen, and talking with him and his wife, especially when the pears were ripe on their two pear trees. People who didn't know Mark as we knew him from the inside might have laughed to hear him called a "pillar". They would have remarked, "he is more like a caterpillar", but I knew him at his best.

Jeannette was our star-woman of the neighborhood. There might conceivably have been a better woman made—as there might be a better berry than the strawberry—but as an actual fact she was the best there was. She was good-looking, perhaps a bit too heavy, always well and neatly dressed. Her house was "spick and span". She had the best house plants in winter and the best summer flower garden. She was the best cook in town and I always kept track of her dough-nut day. I was often invited to dinner with her son and I always knew that I was partaking of the best our little world knew—"the Delmonico" of the place. She was always ready to go to a neighbor's when there was an illness and she always knew what to do when she got there. She was with my mother the night I was born, a very cold winter night in January, and she nursed my mother through a bad siege of rheumatic fever, for there were

no trained nurses then nearer than Portland, and neighbors did what experts do now. There is no way now to do full justice to this wonderful country woman of my youth. I hope she has found her way into the heavenly city.

Dr. Tebbetts was the old-time faithful country doctor. He brought us all into the world and gave us our first spank. He was full of mannerisms and recurrent phrases. He said, "You understand" a dozen times on each visit. He did all the surgery work, all the diagnosing and all the mixing of medicines that got done in our little world. He drove out on the old-time dirt roads in all weathers, in all conditions of snow and mud, often with little prospect of collecting his fee. The only trouble was that, with all his consecration, he often didn't know what to do when he got there, though he was sure to do the best he knew. He was helpless in dealing with rheumatisms, with what the natives called "nooralergy", with tuberculosis and of course with appendicitis. He sat by the bed-side of a boy friend of mine and watched him die with what was almost certainly appendicitis, doing everything he could do, which really amounted to nothing effective. He lanced my foot for a stone bruise and did it with an unsterilized lance and infected the foot, which I nearly lost

and my life with it. But all the time he faithfully attended me and did as well as he knew how to do. He was better than the usual run of country doctors at the time. There was a limit to what any doctor over fifty years of age then knew about most of man's ills. If one is to judge a doctor by his kindness, his faithfulness, his consecration, then our doctor would rank high. I can still smell his medicine chest.

Benjamin was one of our most unique "pillars". He was not much to look at, stooped shouldered, short of stature to begin with, his chin foreshortened and his hair scant. He was shy and very abrupt of speech. He moved in his own orbit and had little to say. He gave the impression of being very stern and grouchy. When once he was mowing on a side-hill slope his mowing machine tipped over and pinned him under it, he shouted for help and a neighbor came, lifted the machine and got him out of durance. His only remark was: "That's all I need of thee". When asked in fly-time why he didn't have screens in his house his sufficient answer was: "It makes more flies in the barn". He always worked on the Fourth of July as on other days, but he would never mow his hay when the wind was in the east, so his son used to climb up on the barn the night before "the

fourth" and fasten the weather vane plumb east, and in this way he sometimes got a holiday.

One day when Benjamin was threshing his oats he got his hand caught in the awful "beater" of the machine. It mangled his hand and was carrying his arm further in when with the other hand he managed to stop the machine. When the doctor came to perform the extensive surgery needed, he refused ether and even spirits. He put his hand on the table and said: "Go ahead doctor and do what thee must". There was not a cry or a groan through the entire operation. Well, this man who seemed so stern was one of the tenderest-hearted persons in the town, if only he could be "tender" and not have anybody know it. When he heard that one of the neighbors with a sick wife had no proper wood in the winter cold he went after dark and dumped a large load of dry stove wood in the yard of the home. He heard of a family that had no butter. He left a can of milk at the door and in it was floating a four pound chunk of butter. As age came on him the fine tender side of him came into dominance and he grew in gentleness and finished life with everybody loving him.

We had, of course, the usual fat man. Ours was so fat that he could only go in through his

door sideways, and he weighed 350 pounds. He was more properly called a "sleeper" than a "pillar". Then we had the usual "close", or "mean" man. Our "close" man sold some hens one day which were delivered in a far part of the town. On the way to their destination some of the hens laid eggs *in transitu* and for a long period there was a controversy between the seller and the buyer over the issue of the ownership of the eggs.

Isaac, my next "pillar", was neither fat nor mean; he was lean and generous. He was one of the best farmers in town and managed two farms well. Everything about his house and barns was kept in order. He had a "Summer Sweeting" tree and two "Wine-Sap" trees, which we boys were free to visit, on condition that we didn't *club* them. In spite of his two farms and his high-grade farming, he was one of the best of our Grocery-store "sitters". We were particular not to use the word, "loafers", because this Grocery-store aspect of our village was too important a feature of life to be expressed by an opprobrious word. I usually walked home with him at night, as he lived in my direction and I was always on the best of terms with him.

He was the best fisherman on our side of the

lake, and on rainy, or better still, "lowery" days, he used to take me out on the lake and show me with deft skill, how to "skip" for pickerel. I usually came back with four or five large, white-bellied pickerel and an enlarged area of fisherman's skill. Isaac had four full-grown steers in his back pasture by the woods one summer, and they went "wild" and lost their sense of domesticity. In the autumn when the time came for them to be corralled into the barn, having reverted to wild nature, they took to the deep woods, and could not be caught. Isaac organized a vast "steer-party" to hunt them down. We went forth into the woods, about four feet apart, armed with ropes and guns and pitchforks to comb the area. Unfortunately we had not been trained as rodeo-experts and these long-horned steers were sure to be dangerous if they got cornered, but the cold and the snow tamed them and we finally brought them in, somewhat the worse for lack of forage. Isaac treated us to the best the Grocery-store could produce, which would not sound very thrilling now, and the steers were fattened, and went to the Brighton market, where all good cattle used to go. Isaac never went to church or to Meeting, though he always attended neighborhood funerals. Some of the over-pious people might in

their haste have called him an "infidel", but if I had heard them do it, I should have risen in my wrath to repel the slander—and I should have done the same in the case of Mark.

Eben had the only brick house in our part of the town, and it had a pull-bell at the door. He had made the bricks himself and built the house with his own hands, as pioneers are expected to do. One of the less expert helpers was sent to measure the length of a beam and he brought back the report that it was three feet and a foot and the length of the hammer handle! I used to watch Eben in his carpenter shop when he was an old man and it always took me in imagination across the world to Joseph's shop in Nazareth, and I supposed that the shavings curled out of Joseph's plane as they did out of Eben's. He had the swiftest sled in the village and he used to lend it to me, saying in caution, "Look out, my boy, if it really gets to going it will carry you out of the County". He made a round hole in the gable of his barn for the encouragement of the barn-swallows, who nested in comfort within the quiet of the rafters. We boys spent many hours seeing who could throw a stone from the road through that little hole. Every Maine boy, it should be said, calls a stone of the throwing size a "rock". Eben had two

cherry trees behind his brick house and he let us boys share the cherries with the birds. The birds knew even before we did when they were ripe, and "beat us to it", but we got our share all right. Eben professed with the Baptists, but he was extremely kind to the little Quaker boy, who loved to visit his shop in the "heater piece".

The next person I want to speak of was the man we loved to call "Uncle John". He was a short, unimpressive-looking man, though his large head attracted attention and made one turn back for a second glance. He had a marked nasal twang in his voice, which made every one look up when he spoke, and it generally made the thoughtless laugh and want to imitate him. He spent his eighty years on a small farm, picking stones, building stone walls, fighting witchgrass and weeds, in stern conflict with potato rust and potato bugs, and getting a bare living for himself and his family. He had no education, except what a few weeks in an old-fashioned district school gave him, and yet he had a pretty good mastery of the English which was spoken in his neighborhood. He enjoyed reading and was an easy victim for a book agent. By intercourse and reading, he slowly educated himself and made himself able to take his part

in all matters that concerned a citizen of an inland town. His opinion was always worth having, and it was sure to be put into a phrase which would be passed about the town and fastened into the memory of those who heard it. He never once in his life swung out of his ordinary orbit. There were no flights of fancy, no spurts of enthusiasm, no uprushes of genius—the entire life was a plain, steady, straightforward march through the daily routine of commonplace duties. And yet—and yet it was one of the noblest lives I have ever known. It exhibited almost every quality which we demand in a saint. There was at the heart of the man a religious passion which throbbed in everything he did. Nobody knew, he least of all, what his theological system was. He never bothered to think it out. But nobody ever hoed a row of potatoes with him, or pitched a load of hay, without discovering his *religion*. His religion showed itself even to his sheep and cows and horses. He did not learn how to *express* himself until he was long past middle life, and he was already growing old when he learned to pray in public, but before there were any words which told of that religious passion and devotion we all knew it was there. It radiated from him like light from a luminous body. Little

children always believed in him and enjoyed being with him, and he loved them with a warmth which was a surprise to those who knew only the matter-of-fact side of his nature.

He was the kind of man who would keep a church alive if he was the only person left in the township. Neither weather, nor work, ever made any difference with him. He was sitting in his place when it was time for Meeting to begin. Others came and went, he was a fixture. Monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, yearly meetings, could all count on him, and he was always concerned for the life, order, solidity and power of the Meeting. It was the same spirit, whether he was building a stone wall to stand the winter frost or whether he was speaking to business in favor of a policy which would strengthen the church.

But the finest trait of this farmer's life was the spirit of help, the thought of others, which had become second nature in the man. He would hurry through his own haying and then start off with his scythe to help neighbors who had been belated. If there was anybody in the neighborhood sick or in trouble, day after day that scythe would be swung in his grass and our ordinary saint would stand by him until the harvest was over. The same thing happened in

the spring at planting time, and even in the winter, as soon as his own pile of wood was hauled, he was off with his horse to help somebody else draw his year's store of fuel. It was sheer, unalloyed generosity, it was unmixed kindness, and it all flowed out of the religion of the man.

He had trials of the mountainous sort to travel over. Nearly every kind of hard baptism and bitter cup came to him during his life. He played the man in every situation, and though the drama of his life was on a small stage, with few spectators, he played his part like another Greatheart clear through to the end.

Then there was the dear unsainted saint whose name was Hattie. She was a little woman—only a bit over four feet tall. Nobody dreamed when she was a girl that she ever would be called a saint, much less that she would actually *be* one. She had red hair, and a somewhat fiery spirit, which broke out in temper and in hot words whenever there was a provocation. She loved excitement and lived for pleasure, with little concern about other aims. She had no real education, for she was doing something else at the period of life when it is easiest to train the mind. But if she had wanted such training ever so eagerly, it would have

been difficult to have gained it, for her early home was in a back country district, where the schools were poor and took the pupils only through very simple branches of study, and touched them only very slightly with graces and culture.

When she was about forty years old she was powerfully affected by the grace of God, and the very highest kind of culture began to show itself in her life. Everybody knew that something had happened. New traits of character bloomed out like fresh spring flowers and a new kind of life commenced. She had always lived for herself and never thought of doing anything else. Now she went to living for God and for everybody who needed her.

She did not become a missionary, nor did she go to preaching. She had no gifts for such ministry. She bought a little country store near the "four corners" and went to selling light groceries and such simple wares as she could handle. This store soon became one of the principal centres of light in the community—a little temple from which spiritual forces radiated. The little woman lived in her store and could always be found night or day. Persons who had any troubles soon discovered that the little woman in the store knew how to comfort them,

and so they dropped in to tell their tale of woe and to find sympathy and encouragement. Slowly her own little body was racked and twisted by rheumatism until almost every joint was stiff and sore, but she did not talk about her own troubles. With pains twinging her hands and knees she would sit and listen quietly to the petty ills of a neighbor, and her interest and sympathy would go out and her face would light up as she talked, so that no one guessed that she herself was suffering.

Those who had money to spare, and who wished to distribute to the needy, gladly made the tiny rheumatic woman the dispenser of their charity, and she delighted to hobble about, carrying sunshine and something more solid, into homes where trial and poverty made the struggle of life hard. She was never happier than when she had something which she could give, and it always seemed as though she was a messenger of love sent by the great God Himself, and as though the gift came from *Him*, only He chose her hand to carry it for Him. The little store was one of the most joyous places in the whole town. She could laugh as well as mourn, and she could rejoice with those who rejoiced as well as weep with those who wept. Her humor was genuine and her love of mirth

and joy were known everywhere. She enjoyed life as the happy birds do, and the best cure she knew for pain and hardship was thanksgiving and a glowing face. It was wonderful how she enjoyed the beauties of nature. The sight of growing flowers, of autumn colors, of sunset tints, moved her as though she had seen through a veil and had caught a glimpse of a Divine face behind the visible beauty. When she spoke of her heavenly Father her voice trembled and broke with a quaver, for the joy of the divine relationship filled her heart and eyes. It was all so real; it was all so wonderful. Everybody, hardened sinners and innocent little children, knew that she was one of Christ's flock. She was like Him. She gave cups of cold water; she loved those who suffered; she strengthened the tempted and had faith even in those who had little faith in themselves. She wanted everybody to live in love and joy. Would it not be well to have more saints by the grace of God and less controversy and disagreement over the minor details of doctrine and method?

TOWN MEETING

Town meeting was one of the major events of our year. It ranked with "the cattle show" in importance for a boy. In actual fact there were two Town Meetings each year, but there was a marked difference between Spring Town Meeting and Fall Town Meeting. Spring Town Meeting was simon-pure democracy of the best Athenian type, and here a boy could discover the glory of citizenship and have the thrill of "belonging". The Town House stood on a commanding site overlooking the lake, and it was as near the "center" of the Town as a center could be found in a rectangle type of area. The building itself was an odd-shaped rectangle, plain as a pike-staff, unpainted outside and stained inside, above by smoke, and below by tobacco juice (in days before the women came), bare of seats except for a planed pine plank, which ran lengthwise of the hall against the wall on either side, for the old men of the Town to sit on. They formed the outer rim of the

great throng in the hall. They had come from Branch Mills, Weeks Mills, the Neck, Dirigo, Pigeon Plains, the South Road, the Pond Road, the Outlet Road, the Hanson Neighborhood, Deer Hill, Palmetter Hill, the Horseback, China Village, South China and parts adjoining. Here they sat before events began and chattered of affairs, like Homer's old men on the walls of Troy, though I am afraid it is difficult to make a Saga or an Epic of their conversation.

The oldest man of the Town had a gold-headed cane, which was presented to him by the Town, and at his death to the next oldest living citizen. William Crane had it in my day. He was ninety-five when a younger man, admiring his cane, said to him: "How does it feel to be an old man?" "I dunno", replied William who the day before had shingled the roof of his barn, "I dunno, I haven't got there yet!" He never got there. He quietly went over to the great majority and passed his cane on to the next man, never knowing that he was old. "Uncle Stephen" was there—Uncle to everybody—and some youth was sure to say to him, "Won't you tell us about your fight with a bobcat?" The old man straightened up and called back the event from his far past. "Yes, I was go-

ing to the spring for water, before breakfast one morning, many, many years ago. A bob-cat in a tree by the spring suddenly dropped from a limb, lighted on my back, and set his claws into my flesh something terrible. I reached up and took the creature by the nape of his neck, pulled him loose from my back, brought him round with a sudden twist, put him between my knees and squeezed the life out of the creature."

We all had admiration for "Uncle Stephen" and were never tired of hearing how he "squeezed the life out of the creature". An old man from the Neck had driven his horse—the same horse—four times to Ohio and twice to Indiana. He had valuable reminiscences to tell, but not as thrilling as the bob-cat story. All of a sudden, just before the rap came for order, in came old Noah Jones. He was always the last man to cross the lake, just before the ice went out. "It was some run this morning. There was a jam of ice out in the middle of the lake. It was like driving over the roof of a house. I thought one while I'd have to give up and go back. But I said to myself I ain't never went back yit, and I won't begin retreat till the worst comes. I got the horse up to the peak, and we slid down the other side. Then when we got to

the shore the ice was all broke up. I jumped the horse twelve feet. The water came in my old pung and wet my legs. But here I be, ready to vote. I guess, though, I'll go home round the road, and not provoke Providence".

On a similar ride over the ice some years earlier, Uncle Eli, on the way to Monthly Meeting with my Aunt Peace, had come upon an ice-jam like this one. He had broken in several times, but had finally jumped his horse across the danger. He stood on the far side of the "jam" and waited for his father and mother, who were driving an older horse, to come up. Uncle Eli shouted across the space: "Father, I've come across, but thee'd better go round". Another ancient citizen related his visit to "the Aroostook", where he visited what he called "Presquizzle" (Presque-Isle).

Then came the pound of the old oak gavel in the hand of the Town Clerk Willis Washburn—then a young man in the prime of life; now ninety-six and the owner of the gold-headed cane. The first act of business was the nomination and election of a "Moderator" who was the presiding officer for the day. He was nominated from the floor and elected by a show of hands, and then escorted to the rostrum, where he made a brief speech of thanks for "the

signal honor" conferred upon him, promising to be fair and impartial. Next came the election of three "selectmen" to manage the affairs of the Town for "the ensuing year", and to have the oversight of the poor. They were nominated by a caucus in advance and elected by affirmation. The Treasurer and Collector of taxes, the Supervisor of Schools, the Director of Roads (usually one of the selectmen), were thereupon chosen. The amount of money to be appropriated for schools, for breaking snow, for repair of roads, for the care of the poor, had then to be decided, usually involving considerable debate and some criticism from Districts that felt neglected.

Early in the proceedings we had the Report of "the Overseers of the Poor". It consisted in the main of an account of the management of "the Poor House and Farm". This farm was one of the best in town and "the Poor House" was located on one of the most beautiful hilltops in the township, overlooking almost the entire lake and with a sweeping view to the western mountains. The great English Quaker, Joseph John Gurney, stood there once and said, "This lake ought to be called Gennesareth". Here at this beautiful spot were herded the poor of the town. There were a few "ne'er-do-wells", such

as all towns produce, a descendant or two from a local "Kalikak" family, one or two insane patients, and some unfortunates that had fallen by the wayside on journey.

The only one I remember vividly was a poor woman named "Ruth", from "the Neck". She was insane and had a barred room at the top of the House where the view was best. Every time we drove by, going to Monthly Meeting, she put up her window and shouted "For God's sake, get me out of here", hoping that the Quakers might have hearts of pity. But nobody knew what to do with "poor Ruth" if they got her "out". Then there was the poor wreck of a man who fell off a haymow in a barn when he was a youth and "broke his back". He was a bent, twisted, crooked man, like one I used to read about in the New Testament, but nobody came by to heal him. They are all buried now in a little yard on the shore of the lake, very quiet in their small spaces. The House is gone, and the few "poor" that now need care are boarded with families in different parts of the town. And the "Overseers" have little to report.

There was pretty sure to be some one central issue which would call forth all the wisdom and debating skill of the Town—a problem which had all winter been discussed already in the

grocery stores of the different villages. The greatest debate I ever heard as a boy was in this same old Town House over the issue of whether the Town should pay off its "war-debt" in a single year, or continue to the end of time paying interest on it. There was intense feeling over the issue, emotions were deeply stirred, opinion was divided, and all the local Haynes and Websters, the Demosthenes, and Aeschines, of the Town, were primed for and against. The item in the "warrant" was read by the Moderator. There was a brief pause for concentration when an orator from the Neck rose, standing six feet two, a thin, wiry farmer who, like Abraham Lincoln, could split rails, turn a furrow, pitch a load of hay, or make a speech. He was against the payment of the debt, and he represented a strong body of opinion, as the cheers indicated when he rose to speak.

"Fellow Townsmen, we are plain, hardworking men. Our hands are hard with toil. We are more at home with the hoe and shovel than we are at speech-making. I rise today not because I like to hear my voice, but because you need a defender for your cause, and because I feel with you the utter impossibility of carrying the burden that would be rolled upon our backs if this proposal is supported. You know, as I bitterly

know, how hard our struggle is to feed our families, to dig out of our rocky soil enough to keep body and soul together. We have no surplus to draw upon. We are not, thank God, bloated bond-holders. If this misfortune should befall us that this burden of taxation were piled upon us, we should be compelled to sell our cattle, to mortgage our farms, to skimp the food of our families, to wear our old patched clothes for another year, and to bend our backs still lower to the constant grind of our toil. It cannot be done. We must leave it for our children to carry, whose backs are stronger than ours. I call upon you, as one of you, to defeat this proposal."

There were loud cheers, and the "bill" seemed likely to be lost. Slowly and weightily the opposing orator rose from his plank seat and came forward. He was a short, thick-set man. His hair was long and white; his forehead high and broad with fine frontal lobes behind it. His voice was nasal, even more so than most New Englanders. But he had a rare gift of words, and he could think on his feet. He loved his Town. He was proud of its history and its pioneers. He pulled down his vest, as was his habit, handed his cane to a neighbor to have his hands free. He began: "I should think, men

of this Town, from this last speech that we were all worn out with labor, reduced almost to the Poor House, unable to face a small crisis, and ready to load our own burdens on our children. We made this debt ourselves. It is a part of what it cost this Town to set men free from bondage and to restore the Union. I voted for this debt when there was no alternative in sight. I am tired paying interest on it year after year. Our children will have their own obligations. They must not be asked to carry those which belong to our generation. My farm is harder and stonier than most farms in the Town. I am older than most of you who are to vote on this 'bill'. It will cost us all a supreme effort. We shall be obliged to go without some things this year which we want. But when this debt is paid—this honest debt—our Town is free. We can then improve our schools and repair our roads and beautify our Town. And best of all, our children and our children's children will inherit a Town that is free of debt. I am dedicated to the payment of the whole of this War Debt, and I ask you as a man who has grown old among you to vote with me to this end". He got a double applause and the self-denying vote to pay the debt was overwhelmingly carried.

While this second speech was being given I

was eagerly hoping that the bill would pass. I knew only too well how difficult it would be for us to pay our tax, but I felt sure that somehow we should be "matched" with the occasion. And in fact we were "matched" when the call came. The tax was nearly double the usual amount. We got out cord-wood from our magical woods and sold it. We peeled hemlock bark and sold it for tanning. We sold a yoke of oxen which we had raised from calves. That gave us more hay to sell, which John Woodsum of China Village pressed and sold for us in Boston. I helped put through all these operations and transactions. As I used the "spud", which is not a "potato" but a woodman's tool, peeling the hemlock logs that Spring, I was helping our Town pay off its war debt, and I was a proud young citizen.

It is easy to see what a school of life, what a training place of education, this free democratic Town Meeting was for a wide-awake boy. I never missed a word, or lost a point. This was *life*. It was out of these meetings of the people that the Constitution was born, and government of the people, for the people, by the people, came into being. I did not find it in books or study it with a professor. I caught it from the life and saw it operating before my

young eyes. It came into my blood with the north wind and the snow drifts.

One of the most interesting items in the warrant at another March Meeting was the question whether the Town would exempt the taxes for ten years on a mill which John D—— proposed to construct and to operate with *perpetual motion*, by means of an invention, which he had nearly completed, with success in sight. John D. was a very good man, an excellent shoemaker, and exhorter in meeting, and the father of Elijah Elwood, whom I have occasionally mentioned. One eventful night John D. had a “revelation”. He had revealed to him how to construct a machine that would run forever and drive a mill without coal, electricity, gasoline or any other extraneous source of power. Nobody was ever allowed to see it (though Elijah Elwood gave me a glimpse of it) for fear the supreme idea would be stolen and the fame and fortune be lost. But we all knew that the monster had outgrown the shoeshop, had gone up through the roof, and was invading the whole house with wheels and pulleys and springs and joints.

Here then was a live issue: Would the Town exempt this novel mill from taxation, while it was being launched to the eternal glory of the

Town and the never-ending benefit of humanity? There was a subterranean suspicion in the minds of the assembled Solons that the "revelation" needed investigation and that the "motion" might possibly turn out not to be "perpetual". Some who were present dwelt upon the point that *inertia* was a fact to be reckoned with and that *friction* had a way of hampering motion. But that was not the problem before the "house". The issue was a simple one and put in its simplest terms: If the invention worked, and if the mill was built and run without horse-power, or ox-power, or water-power, or any other power so far known to man, would the Town exempt it from taxation for a term of years? Everybody voted *yes*, so that, if by hook or crook anybody ever does invent a perpetual motion machine, here is a place to run it tax-free. For the honor of truth, however, I must add that the "revelation" went awry, and the machine kept stopping after it made a fine start. Those two old enemies of the project, *inertia* and *friction*, refused to withdraw. None of the wheels, not even "the little wheel", as in the Negro *Spiritual*, "ran by the grace of God!"

It should be added "for the honor of truth" that this same John D. was a first class shoemaker before his mind was "addled" by his

vision. I have watched him many times stitching and pegging his faith and love of truth into a little shoe for some unknown child, who was to wear it and who was to have an honest shoe, which would bear the brand and mark of this man's righteous craft. His religion was in the shoe.

The Fall Town Meeting in September was not quite as vital and gripping as the March Meeting, though it was more expansive. It took in not only local affairs, but those of the County, the State and the Nation. The reason it was not as "vital" was that there were no speeches, no immediate decisions, but an all day ballot, with no results known until evening. But nevertheless we boys were in full force, and the old Trojans were there too, sitting on the wall, which was the plank seat, and chattering over former battles in which they took a major part. The "chattering" was not always about great political battles of the past. It dropped easily to gossip and reminiscence. "Did you hear how 'Long Nose' Tom froze the end of his nose last winter?" Someone asked why he didn't rub it to keep it from freezing. "He said he did rub it out as far as he could reach." Old Benjamin Fry turned to his seatmate and asked: "Who is this man, James G. Blaine, they

talk about? I haven't seen anything about him in the *Friends' Review*," which was a Quaker Weekly and the only news sheet Benjamin read. "How is your new teacher doing this Fall?" a citizen asked a neighbor in the upper district. "She's doing pretty well, I guess. The children like her. But it looks to me as though she was drawed rather tight", which meant that she "laced". "How did your apples go this year?" one man asked of another. "Oh, they sold well to a feller in Waterville. They blew off in a storm and were 'windfalls', but the trees were low, and they didn't fall very far, so I sold 'em for firsts, and I did pretty well."

But enough of the chatter on the wall. The business of the day was important. First and foremost we had to select a representative to the State Legislature, and we were coupled with the Town of Windsor in the selection of our man. That Town was likely to go Democratic, and our Town was sure to go Republican. But could we run up a large enough majority to offset the lead of the Democrats in the lower Town was always our problem. The result was that every voter was got out on Fall Election Day. Sometimes, though not often, we had a local man running for the State Senate. That was always a high moment in our lives. One of our

greatest distinctions was the fact that the Sheriff of the County was one of our townsmen. It is quite within the range of possibility that the famous Maine Liquor Law of 1850 originated in the Town of China, but it cannot now be proved to everybody's satisfaction. It is at least a good tradition.

Every year, in my youth, we elected a Governor, every two years a Representative to Congress, and once in six years a Senator, always in both the latter cases the same man, for Maine believed in long term service. The Governor was apt to get two terms, if he was worthy, and even more terms, if he was a "great man", as he sometimes was. The presidential year was always a momentous occasion in our region, because in those days it was assumed that as Maine went, so the Nation was sure to go. The result of that "ideology" was that the greatest campaigners in the country were brought to Maine before the September Election and we heard the highest powered "guns". Of course there was no higher caliber "gun" than our own Blaine, and we always heard him, and he assured us that what made a Town prosperous was "a high tariff". On one occasion a huge campaign meeting was announced with posters as large as the side of a barn, adorned with the

names of thrilling speakers. Down near the bottom in small letters was the name of a speaker not yet famous. It turned out that he was the only speaker who actually arrived. The Committee asked him to begin and to hold the audience until the main speakers came. He talked on and on and nobody came to "spell" him. Finally a farmer in the audience called out: "Keep on young feller. We like you. Go on till milking time", which he did with memorable effect.

In these crucial elections our Town always assumed that every man in China "must do his duty". If four thousand years were not looking down upon us from the top of the pyramids, every eye in America was strained to see what *we* would do to settle the fate of the nation! And we boys, who couldn't vote yet, were a part of a great nation, and we knew that the vote of our Town was helping to settle the fate of the country, and we felt the grandeur of the event. Now we are talking about saving Democracy. One of the best ways of "saving" it is to arouse in the hearts of our people in every local community that patriotic pride and joy which we boys felt as our Town lined up to show the country where it stood on the great issues of life. And one of the best things that could hap-

pen would be a return of population back to the country, back to the farms, and back to local pride in the community to which one "belongs".

The story is not quite complete without a few words on "working out" our road-tax. A certain proportion of our Town tax each year was designated for "roads", and that amount could be paid in work, including the horses, oxen and boys of the family. From the time I was twelve I was a "hand" at working out the road-tax. The work in our "Deestrick" was always under the direction of Homer Freeman, who loved hard cider, who had an amazing vocabulary of "hot words", but who was a very wise road builder of the old type, and a likable man. It was one of his theories that there should be no loose stones on the road, especially not on the hills. One of my early tasks was to walk the road with a hoe, and to remove every loose stone which might "throw a horse". The spring frost and the "quagmires" from frost and rain played havoc with dirt roads, and there were always sections that had to be remade in May. We boys had a "belief" that these "quagmires" had no bottom, and that if you dropped a crow-bar into one of them it would go on until it came through into Oriental China on the other side

of the world. There was a rumor, which the Town skeptics refused to believe, that a Maine Sea-Captain, sailing in the China Sea, had once seen a crow-bar shoot up through the water and then fall back and sink before he could be sure of its origin!

We plowed three or four furrows each side of the road, and then cross-scraped the dirt in with huge scrapers, and smoothed it off with picks and hoes, and produced a road, which at first was almost impassable, but which finally was beaten down by passing wheels and became in time "a lovely road". My job as a boy was to ride on the "plow-beam" and hold the plow in its place as it ripped through bushes and bumped over rocks. It called for agility and a bit of nerve, especially when Homer was using his most "peppy" language to the horses or the oxen. We always carried our dinner and ate it in throngs by the roadside, when one heard much salty wisdom and learned a lot about life. Even if we didn't do much good to roads, we got our taxes paid, and we had the satisfaction of working together as a community, saints and sinners on the same job, side by side. It was as exciting as football, and was better exercise.

I never bowl over this road in a modern car without vivid memories that *here* and *here* I

helped America once. Here we plowed and scraped and built the shoulders to this strip of road. Here we constructed a wall to keep this bit of road from flattening out. And here from this hill every stone was painfully removed and travel made safe. It looks humble enough now in the light of macadam roads and speeding cars and expert roadmakers. But I am thinking of how a boy once was an inherent and essential part of this town. He helped to make these highways safe and passable, and, in doing it, with his community, he made his contribution to the nation and in his rôle felt that he was helping to make the country to which he belonged. Here for me, then, is a little corner of the world that is forever America.

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